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[HER FACE WAS HER FORTUNE.]

ALICE DESMOND'S TROTH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"That Young Person," "Why She Forsook Him," &c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE HEROINE.

Constant sunshine, howe'er welcome,
Ne'er would ripen fruit or flower;
Giant oaks owe half their greatness
To the scathing tempest's power.

A humble cottage miles and miles away from London, far distant from any town, in the heart of a peaceful village in one of the English shires.

Clematis clambered over the rustic porch—roses bloomed in the garden. The tiny grass-plot was smooth as velvet, the gravel path had not a weed.

Small and unpretending as was the place, it must have belonged to one who had a real taste for beauty.

Within, too, all spoke the same tale. The parlour furniture in its best days could not have been worth much; now it was old and shabby, but not with the shabbiness of neglect or disorder; only that of use and time.

The fire-irons shone like the finest steel; the linen blinds were of dazzling whiteness; the few books on the table were such as are ever fresh, and the single picture—indeed, the only ornament the room contained—was the portrait

of a girl who, in the pride of her youth and beauty, seemed to smile on the beholder from the canvas as though no care or sorrow had ever dimmed her joy.

The room was not to be left long unoccupied. Footsteps sounded on the narrow staircase, and presently two persons entered the parlour—a man of middle-age, calm and self-possessed, as though nothing ever had and nothing ever could disturb his equanimity, and a girl of about eighteen, who sank wearily into a chair—a chair, by-the-way, where those pictured features on the wall could not meet her eye.

"Is there no hope?"

Her companion looked on her not unpitifully as he answered:

"While there is life there is hope, Miss Desmond."

"Dr. Grant," cried the girl, impatiently, "do not treat me like a child. You only make my misery worse by keeping me in suspense. Tell me what you really think of my mother. Forget I am her daughter and that she is all I have in the world. Tell me as though I were an utter stranger."

He was not at all offended at this passionate outburst.

He had known Alice Desmond ever since she first came to live at Ashton twelve years before, and he probably felt as much concern at her trouble as it was possible for him to feel at any sorrow not immediately affecting himself.

Keen sensibilities Dr. Grant never had.

Probably he passed through life much more comfortably without them.

Unless one be very rich or very happy feelings are a decided nuisance.

"Mrs. Desmond will never be strong again,"

the Doctor began again, slowly. "Nay, more, any sudden shock—any unexpected blow—will probably be fatal to her."

"But will she live? If I could keep her with me even as an invalid I should be happy."

"But she?"

"I am very selfish. Please tell me all you can."

"Your mother has no energy left. She has not sufficient vital force to support the burden of life. If she had an easeful home, perfect freedom from care and sorrow, skilful nursing, change of scene, and all sorts of strengthening things, she might live for years."

"And now—without them?"

"You insist upon hearing?"

"I insist upon it."

"Humanly speaking, then, Miss Desmond, you will not keep her with you three months."

"Thank you."

Her voice was perfectly steady.

She bowed her head to him in sign of dismissal, and he went out. No empress could have dismissed a servant more regally, but left alone her self-possession faded, the icy command she had held over her feelings broke down.

Alice Desmond buried her face in her hands and cried; no burst of weeping, no loud sobs, only those bitter, voiceless tears which come when the heart is nearest to breaking.

Presently she dried her eyes, and walked slowly towards the small looking-glass which hung over the fireplace; she looked long and earnestly at her own image reflected there, as though her appearance mattered very much to her. It was not vanity; what she saw gave her no pleasure, although such a face would have been the envy of many women.

There was but one word to describe Alice Desmond: the first time people saw her they called her beautiful, and when they came to know her well, no familiarity would make them indifferent to her face.

It was a perfect oval, and its features were regular as though chiselled by the sculptor's art.

The wondrous warmth of colouring which suffused her delicate skin preserved her from being statuesque; her eyes were large, velvety brown, with long, dark lashes, and pencilled brows; her hair was brown too, the brightest chestnut brown, and was exquisitely soft and thick; she wore it coiled low, and this suited her well.

It was very strange she could care to look at herself and her own charms so soon after the verdict which had so grieved her; it could not have been vanity, for there was nothing in her dress or manner to betoken vanity, which always makes itself evident in a girl's appearance, however poor she may be.

Alice, on the contrary, might have been blamed for too little attention to the toilet; her cheap grey dress was unrelieved even by a bow of ribbon, and the simple linen collar was not fastened by any brooch; she had on no cuffs, and her wrists showed beyond her untrimmed sleeves; white, slender wrists they were too, while her hands were small and shapely as a duchess's, only there was an ominous pricking of the forefinger, showing she led no idle life.

Her dress, the humble cottage and its shabby furniture, all told of poverty, yet no one who knew the species could have doubted that Alice Desmond was a lady.

Not the least pleasure came to her face as she looked earnestly at her own fair image; critically, calmly, she gazed on it, almost as though it had been that of another person, when, as she turned away, slowly and sadly came the words:

"For my mother's sake, is she not worth any sacrifice?"

"Your mamma is asleep, Miss Alice, dear."

The interruption came from an elderly woman, sole servant in the cottage, a servant of the good old school, who regard as their very own the interests of those they serve.

Alice Desmond had lain in that woman's arms a tiny baby; she was like a friend to her, so it was no wonder she answered:

"Sit down, Martha, I want to talk to you."

"Ay, but, Miss Alice, you ought to be resting now she don't want you; it's two nights now that you've been up with the mistress, not that she seems ill, only weak and low."

"I cannot rest," returned Alice Desmond, hotly. "I cannot sit down quietly and let her die, and she will die, Martha, if we can't get her things she ought to have. This place is just killing her, that and the way we live; she was never strong; she grows weaker every day; very soon I shall lose her."

"Surely not that, Miss Alice; surely Dr. Grant didn't say that?"

"He said if she could have a life free from care, be happy and entirely at ease, go away into some fresh, fine air, and have all sorts of strengthening things, I might keep her for years. But these things cost money, Martha."

"Oh, Miss Alice, and when I remember her that used to wear silks and satins, as though they were her right, which indeed they were, it seems cruel."

"I don't think we could ever make her happy, Martha; money could give her all the other things, but it could never do that. Mamma has always been sad since I remember."

"But she wasn't always so, dear. The beautiful young lady the sun ever shone upon, and the gayest too she was till the trouble came."

"What trouble, Martha? You always stop there."

"It's the mistress herself must tell you, if anyone does, Miss Alice, but, indeed, you are not fitted to hear it."

"Not fitted to hear of trouble? Why, Martha, I have borne plenty."

"Ay, but not trouble like that."

"Martha," eagerly, "tell me, was it about my father?"

"Your father! What do you know about your father, Miss Alice?"

"Nothing."

"Then ask nothing, my dear young lady, for your mother's sake."

"Tell me one thing!" cried Alice, clinging to her, "is he dead?"

"I do not know."

"If he were alive surely he would not let us live here in poverty, his wife and child."

"Your mamma came here of her own accord, Miss Alice."

"I can just remember coming. I was six years when—it is twelve years ago."

"Ay, twelve years?"

"Martha," said Alice, impetuously, "you know more of my mother's past than I do, tell me is there no one who loved her then when she was young and happy who would help her now. We must have money. I am not too proud to beg for her. I would starve myself rather than ask aid, but I cannot see her fade away for want of what money would buy."

"Miss Alice, when we came here my mistress made me take a solemn oath I would never speak to you of the past. If I hadn't promised her never to tell you about it I should have been sent away. I loved you too well, dear, ay—and her too, to leave you, so I promised, and I mustn't break my word."

"But to save her life?"

"I'm thinking, missie; there's the things in the little cabinet she used to show you of a Sunday when you were little, they'd fetch money."

"I could not take them, she might ask for them, and Martha she loves them so. I think sometimes when she has them in her hand she is almost happy; they seem to carry her right back into the past, the past of which I know nothing."

"You are young, Miss Alice dear, to have to think of these things; young folks like you ought not to have a breath of care."

"If she would only trust me, only tell me her trouble, and let me cry with her."

"It's all love for you, dear, keeps her silent."

"But if I lose her—if she slips from my side just for want of a few luxuries?"

"There's the parson, Miss Alice, a good man, he might advise you."

"He would propose my going out as a governess; I couldn't do that, Martha; come what may, I'll never leave my mother—never!"

"But the rector could never ask you to, Miss Alice, now she's so weak and ill."

"Yes," came bitterly from the girl's lips.

"Mr. Burn's creed is to help those only who help themselves. If he could have induced mamma to send me away as a pupil teacher long ago, and to what he calls 'rouse herself,' he might have done something for us; now if I went to him he would only blame me for my idleness, and call my mother's illness fancies. Mr. Burn may be a good man, Martha, but he has very little charity."

"Then there's nothing for it, Miss Alice, but to wait and hope. If only your pictures could be sold now."

"Who would buy them in this wretched village?"

"Not wretched, Miss Alice; don't go for to call it that; before the mistress was ill you lived here happy enough."

"I have never lived in my life, Martha, I have only existed."

"Hark! was not that your mamma calling, Miss Alice?"

"Go and see, Martha; stay with her if she is awake."

"Aren't you coming up, Miss Alice?"

"Not yet."

The servant looked surprised; it was so unlike Alice's usual devotion to her mother:

"What shall I say if the mistress asks for you, miss?"

"Make some excuse. I cannot come yet. I may be an hour, even more."

"You are never going out?"

"Yes, I am."

"But your mamma will miss you so."

"I must go, Martha, don't let her know, and, Martha, take care of her, and—pity me. I don't know whether I am doing right or wrong, but I am going for her sake, not my own."

And Martha came to the conclusion that her young lady, having reconsidered the matter, was going to solicit the help and pastoral advice of the Rev. Milton Burn.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE WOOD.

Oh love for a year, a week, or a day,
But alas for the love that loves away!

Years before Alice Desmond and her mother came to the quiet London Cottage, admission had been sought and obtained for a boy called William Gordon into an orphan asylum.

He entered it a poor, forlorn child of three. No one knew aught of his previous history, no one knew aught of his parents, save the fact which gained him his present shelter, they were dead; other orphans had happy memories of homes which once had been theirs; to William the word was meaningless.

Other orphans had friends to see them on the visiting days of the asylum, but from the time the huge iron gates closed on him with their melancholy clang, no living soul had ever asked for William Gordon.

He grew up a handsome, manly boy, clever to a degree, but grave, melancholy and passionate.

The best feelings of his nature seemed to be warped. He must be first or he would be nothing.

He had an intense love of possession; he could not admire a thing without longing for it to be his own.

He was not dishonest, but he was avaricious; he yearned for fame and riches.

Both might some day be his; his talent for painting was so remarkable, that one of the patrons of the asylum generously defrayed the expenses of his art studies, and as he grew up, helped forward his career with a friendly hand.

William was a born artist. He threw himself heart and soul into his art; he lived for it; he toiled early and late; he studied hard; he possessed a vivid imagination, a rare energy, and these with his great natural talents caused it to be little surprise for his acquaintance when, before he was twenty-six, one of his pictures hung on the walls of the Royal Academy.

That picture decided his fate; it was a success; critics were unanimous in its praise, and the crowds who daily passed before it endorsed the verdict. Gordon was famous. The unknown orphan was one of the recognised lights of the day. His picture sold for five hundred pounds; orders flocked in; celebrity was his already; wealth would surely follow.

He made no change in his style of living; still inhabited the remote apartments at Putney he had taken when on the completion of his studies he first began to work for himself. The studio was large and commodious, the other rooms small and dingy. It seemed to matter very little to William Gordon. Certainly he did not live for pleasure.

All through the years of his early manhood he had been alone, no one to love or care for, nothing to soften or humanise him, and he had insensibly grown harder.

There had been much good in the young painter; a mother would have adored him, but he had no mother, no relations in the world. He never sought friends, it was not his way, and in his struggling days few cared to find him out in his gloomy abode; thus from twenty to twenty-six he lived emphatically a lonely life.

He had deep feelings. The old passion of

his nature had not changed, if anything it had strengthened; to love with him was still to desire, and because in these six weary years he had received and given little affection, his love was the more carefully treasured within his heart.

Greatness, not goodness, was his life's ambition. He had no faith in religion, no belief in goodness. He considered himself the architect of his own fortunes, and quite forgot the helping hand which had launched him in the battle of life.

Yet he was not a bad man, simply one whose youth had been unhappy, whose passions required the strongest restraint and had received none.

It was characteristic of him that he should leave London in the season; that he should wander about among the beauties of English scenery, seeking an object for his next year's picture.

In time to come, when he should be both rich and great, he would probably enter into all the gaieties of Belgravia, and become a zealous votary of fashion, at present he was too proud; he would not be in society until he could be of it.

So one lovely July day, when the élite of the upper ten thousand were bidden by royalty to a garden party, our painter, attired in a tourist's suit of dark grey and a plain straw hat, was seated in a wood hundreds of miles from Belgravia, sketching the outlines of a picture destined to take the world by storm.

He was decidedly a handsome man; his curly hair was jet black; his complexion bronzed by constant exposure to the sun; his eyes were his best feature, dark expressive grey; his nose was irreproachable; his mouth a trifle too hard, only that the hardness was hidden by a silky moustache.

This summer day William Gordon did not sketch with his usual zest; his heart was not entirely in his work.

The dark eyes were raised from time to time to look inquiringly into the distance; then, as they failed to meet the object of their search, they sank again, and he sighed; but that he was a stranger in the neighbourhood it would have seemed he expected someone.

He did expect someone, and at last she came, when the grey eyes had almost ceased to watch for her; a girl of slight, graceful figure, with bright brown hair, in a word, Alice Desmond.

It was not their first meeting evidently. She seemed an old acquaintance of the artist. He took her hand, and did not immediately let it go; his face softened strangely while he held that little hand in his.

"So you have come at last?"

"I could not come before."

"It was weary waiting for you."

"But you had your work."

"Work is not everything to a man; you have taught me that."

"But it ought to be."

"It never can be to me again."

"I wish I were a man."

"I am very glad you are not. Why make such a wish?"

"I would work."

"Women work too; their work is to make homes. No place can be home without a woman."

He looked on her with open admiration, and she knew it. She thought for the sake of her beauty he would grant the request which hovered on her lips; it was for that she had looked so anxiously in the mirror; the sacrifice she would make for her mother's sake was the asking help of a stranger.

A great oppression hung over her; little as she knew of society and its code, she felt instinctively she was doing something unusual in meeting a stranger there alone, and she felt, too, just as instinctively that but for her beauty he would not have cared to meet her, yet she was no coquette; she had no idea William Gordon regarded her with anything beyond admiration.

"Mr. Gordon, when I sat to you and you sketched my face for your picture I told you I

was poor, I am worse than poor now; my mother is ill and I cannot take the care of her she needs."

"I am sorry."

"Could you—would you," her voice trembling as she spoke, for to her pride the request she was going to make seemed akin to begging,— "would you buy some of my drawings?"

He looked at her in mute surprise. She began to untie the string of a portfolio she carried in her hand.

"It is for her sake or I would not ask you; you told me you lived in London; don't you think you could sell them there for me?"

"Don't untie them," he said huskily; "don't show them to me; tell me all about yourself. What is the matter?"

"I have told you all about myself before: how we have lived twelve years in this stupid village, but we were happy enough till mamma got ill. We had enough, you know then. I don't want a great deal for myself. I only want it for her. I would do anything in the world to make her well."

"Alice, do you trust me?"

She was not offended at his calling her Alice; the artist and his lovely model had grown strangely familiar over the sittings.

"If I had not trusted you do you think I should have asked this of you?—and you have refused me," looking at him with her brown eyes full of tears.

"Yes, I will never sell your drawings, you are far too beautiful to toil for bread. Alice, I am going to Italy next month, your mother would soon get well there."

"Yes."

"And you could study drawing since you are so fond of it, and by-and-bye you should exhibit your pictures and be famous. I am sure you would love Italy, Alice."

"I should dearly like to go there, but you know I cannot."

"I know nothing of the sort, you can go—you shall go if you wish it, and your mother too; she will soon get well in bright, beautiful Italy."

"But how in the world—by what magician's hand—do you propose to waft us to Italy?"

"By the magic of a single word, 'Yes.'"

"To what am I to say 'Yes'?"

"To this question, darling: Will you be my wife?"

"Your wife!" in amazement.

"My wife, Alice. I would guard you from all sorrow. I would give you the love of my life. Your mother should be mine."

"You have not known me a month, how can you possibly love me?"

"Because you are beautiful—I adore beauty; because you have crept into my heart by storm. Alice, if I never saw you again, I should go on loving you; if fate compelled me to marry another woman I should go down to my grave loving you and you only. Be my wife, take my whole heart and give me a right to care for you and your mother."

Those last words touched her, "and your mother."

"I like you very much," she said, with sweet frankness. "I like you better than anyone I know, but then I only know Mr. Burn and Dr. Grant. I think you must be very good to want to marry me, but I am afraid I don't feel quite as you do."

"Women never can feel as men do."

"I don't know much about love. How ought one to feel?"

"Happier and yet more miserable than ever before."

"But I don't want to feel more miserable than ever before."

"You are making me more miserable than I ever was in my life by keeping me in suspense."

"But I don't know what to say. I had no idea you liked me so much."

"I don't like you at all, I worship you."

She sat on in silence, wondering what to answer. Alice Desmond's heart was utterly untouched; she knew nothing of love, or as she had naively said, how one felt when in love. She knew that Gordon was a gentleman; that

these strange stolen meetings with him had brought a new keen interest into her life. She knew he would open to her the world beyond sleepy Ashton—the great gay London world for which she pined—he would be a son to her mother—and yet she hesitated.

No thought of consulting her mother came to her. Mrs. Desmond loved her child intensely, but she had never made a companion of her; the barrier of a secret had always divided them.

Her mother lived entirely in the past. Alice had often dreamed of love; she had fancied that being in love must be something of a rapturous nature, which lifted persons in that condition far above all petty troubles, yet now she felt sadder than usual, every little worry was clearly present to her while Gordon spoke, still that was her fault, perhaps; evidently he loved her very much, and he had promised to be good to her mother. Ought she not to say "Yes?"

"Wouldn't you get very tired of me?" she asked him, presently. "I have never left Ashton since I was six years old. I never saw a newspaper in my life. I know nothing of the great world you live in. Oh, you would find me very stupid."

"Only let me try."

"I could never leave my mother."

"I would never ask you to leave her. I will be a son to her. Alice, say yes."

"Yes, then," she whispered; "that is, if you don't mind my being stupid, and my not feeling quite sure."

"You love no one else, my sweet one?"

"Only my mother."

"Then I will risk all, my darling, my wife that will be," and he bent and kissed her passionately.

She was motionless in his embrace, suffering rather than returning it. Then the distant church clock chimed the hour, and as the sounds fell upon her ear she freed herself from his grasp and started up, exclaiming:

"It is five o'clock; I must go back to my mother."

"No, I cannot spare you yet. I have a great deal to say to you."

"Then say it quickly, mother will be waiting for me."

"I shall go to London to-night, my sweet wild bird. I shall make all arrangements for our wedding, then I will come back and fetch you. Alice, if your mother loves you, surely she will consent to our happiness."

"She will consent," said the girl, with strange decision.

"I will come back in a fortnight. You will have told her all then, and she will expect me too."

"Yes."

"Alice, will you think of me while I am gone?"

"I will think of you every day. I shall miss you very much."

"My darling! When we are married, Alice, I will take you to London, you and your mother. Then we will go to Italy, and by the time she has grown well and strong you will have learned to love me; will you not, Alice?"

"Yes; I shall love you then, but let me go now, she will want me, indeed she will."

"Who can want you so much as I?" but he saw her anxiety, and let her have her way.

Another kiss, a last good-bye, and she had left him, and was walking rapidly homewards. Soon she was through the wood, out into the open fields, caring little for the burning heat of the July sun.

In after time Alice Desmond never forgot that walk; years after, the sight of poppies in the corn used to give her a faint, sick feeling; years after fields of waving wheat brought back to her a keen, sharp pain.

In half an hour she was at home.

Martha was watching for her, and had the door open before she could knock; but there was that in the woman's face which silenced all questions.

Alice could only rush upstairs to her mother's room.

The room looked just as Alice had left it a few hours before.

Mrs. Desmond's writing-table was drawn close to the sofa, and on it lay pages freshly written.

Poor Alice, awestruck by the look of sorrow on Martha's face, had eyes for none of these familiar objects; she rushed to the sofa; she took her mother's hand in hers, she called on her by every fond and endearing name, but no answer came.

The sweet, worn face, so different from the joyous picture downstairs, would never smile on her daughter more; the voice, which had never spoken to Alice but in love, would speak to her again no more.

Mrs. Desmond was dead! No need now for Alice to murmur for her sake at poverty, or crave aid and protection from the cruel world which had proved all too hard for her.

From all the mistakes and bitter disappointments of this mortal life, Annie Desmond the elder was at rest for ever.

And the younger Alice was left alone—alone save for one faithful servant; the sense of utter desolation came to her but too quickly; ten minutes after she had entered the cottage full of hope, she was weeping bitterly the loss of one whose place in her heart could never be filled.

"How was it, Martha?" she asked, presently, when the old servant had led her downstairs, and placed her almost like a child on the shabby sofa; "mamma was asleep when I left here."

"She had just woke up, Miss Alice. You sent me up to her," too kind to remind the daughter that she herself had urged her to go to Mrs. Desmond and been met by a refusal.

"Dr. Grant told me there was no danger; even at the worst he thought we might keep her some months."

"And he believed it, missie, and so it might have been, for he's a clever man; but it was the shock which killed her, poor dear," wiping away a tear half for the mother who was gone, half for the orphan who remained.

"What shock? Martha, tell me all about it. Oh, don't keep anything back; let me know all she did while I was away."

"You hadn't been gone ten minutes, Miss Alice, when Job Trotter called; he'd been round by the post-office, and finding a letter waiting there for the mistress, he brought it here just neighbourly-like."

"Oh, don't stop to speak of Job Trotter, Martha, tell me only about mamma."

"Well, I took the letter up to her, Miss Alice, and she opened it and read it through; but her face changed, she grew quite white, and shivered a little, but she didn't seem unhappy, only surprised. She asked for you then, dear, and I said you'd gone out a tiny way."

"Wicked girl that I was to leave her."

"You couldn't tell what was going to happen, Miss Alice, and I'm sure my mistress had no thought of it herself. She just asked me for her pen and ink, and I propped her up while she wrote; when she'd done she just told me to put my mark to it to show I knew she'd written it. She lay back then quiet, calm and comfortable, while I ran downstairs to see about the tea."

"When I got up again, Miss Alice, she seemed strangely quiet and white. She didn't answer when I spoke to her, so I got the little boy next door to run for Dr. Grant."

"Oh, Martha, why didn't you send for me?"

"But I didn't know where you were, my Jeary. The doctor he was at home, and he came at once; he just looked at your poor mamma, Miss Alice, and then he told me there was nothing for us to do; she must have had some great shock."

"I shall never forgive myself," sobbed Alice. "She asked for me and I wasn't there. Oh, I deserve to be miserable."

"She wouldn't say so, Miss Alice. Many's the time I've heard her call you her only comfort."

"A poor comfort, Martha, to run away when she most wanted me."

"She had no pain, dear. The Doctor said it must have been quite sudden like. He is coming again in the evening to see you."

"To see me, Martha, why?"

"You're so young, dear, he thought maybe you'd like him to take all the sad work that must be done off your hands."

"It's very kind of him, Martha, very, but does he know how poor we are?"

"I'm atinking, Miss Alice, that the letter your poor mamma wrote this afternoon may have been asking someone to take care of you. Shall I bring it to you?"

"Yes."

But when it came Alice could not read it; her eyes filled at the sight of the last lines her mother's hand would ever trace. The letter filled three sheets of paper, and with these there was an envelope addressed to Edward Marston, Esq., solicitor, of the Middle Temple.

(To be Continued.)

A WASTED LIFE.

My neighbours furrowed brow and cheek,
His eye tear-moist and dim,

Tell more than words can ever speak
How time has dealt with him.

He is not old, but short indeed
His stay on earth will be;

And these are the words he bade me heed,
When last he spake to me:

"Begin your life in honour now;
Woe not by deed of shame

Dishonour that will brand your brow,
And soil your father's name.

Live as becomes the man to live
Who nought but evil fears—

Who will not to his fellows give
A needless cause for tears—

Who honour pays through all his days
To the mother, at whose knee

He learned to walk in wisdom's ways,
And bear him manfully.

With these last words, my boy, we part:
Let them sink deep, I pray;

May no such torture rend your heart
As racks my soul to day.

Of all the truths I've learned in shame
The bitterest is that sin

Is at the best a losing game
For those who play and win.

And although Justice moves so slow
She seems at rest to stand,

She comes;—e'en now I feel the blow
Of her ruthless iron hand.

And my soul is crushed with a cruel weight,
Will Heaven in mercy relent?

Father, have pity on him whose fate
Is to weep o'er a life misspent!"

G. B.

SCIENCE.

A NEW FIBRE.

SMALL quantities of a new variety of fibre are, reports the "Colonies and India," received in England from time to time for which a great demand is likely to arise if its production on a sufficiently large scale can be relied upon. It is the produce of a variety of aloe said to be peculiar to Mauritius, or which, at any rate,

grows in abundance on that island, and from the leaves of which long fibrous threads of peculiar tenacity and pliability are extracted. The leaves are simply crushed, and do not require to undergo the complicated processes necessary for preparing hemp or flax, so that the cost of labour is greatly reduced. Threads and ropes of these fibres are said to be superior to any known material of similar kind, and a line made from them will excel in toughness an iron wire of the same size. At the same time the suppleness is such as to obviate all the disadvantages attending the use of stiff metal wire.

The parcels of the new fibre which have reached this country have been well reported on by competent judges, and the principal difficulty in the way of its extended use is the limited supply. With careful cultivation, it is probable that the growth of the aloe might be encouraged, and its introduction into other countries, the soil and climate of which are suitable for its production, would enlarge its at present limited area of growth. The aloe will grow in temperate as well as in hot climates, and is adapted for a dry soil. Many others of our colonies besides Mauritius, with its 730 square miles, might attempt its cultivation. One of the chief properties of the material is that it is believed to be free from the liability to rots which characterises all other fibres when exposed to the action of salt water.

IMPROVEMENTS IN SILK WORM BREEDING.

"GALIGNANI" states that a very curious discovery has just been made, which, if found as practicable in application as it seems to promise, may create a very considerable change in the production of silk. It is nothing more nor less than the possibility of obtaining two yields in the year of the raw material instead of one, as at present. The moth lays its eggs in May or June, and these do not hatch before the spring of the following year. But sometimes they are observed to hatch spontaneously ten or twelve days after they are laid.

It was such a circumstance as this coming to the attention of M. Ducloux, Professor of the Faculty of Sciences at Lyons, that led him to undertake a series of experiments on the subject, by means of which he has found that this premature hatching can be produced at will.

The means for effecting the object are very simple—rubbing the eggs with a hair brush, subjecting them to the action of electricity, or more surely still by dipping them for half a minute in concentrated sulphuric acid. M. Bollé, who has also turned his attention to the same subject, states that the same effect is produced by hydrochloric, nitric, or even acetic and tartaric acid. Finally, a submersion of a few seconds in water heated to 50° Cent. (122° Fah.) is equally efficacious. However, M. Ducloux states that the operation must be performed while the eggs are quite young, the second or third day at the outside.

When this new hatching is accomplished the mulberry tree is in its full vigour, and the weather so favourable that the rearing of the worm is liable to much less risk than during the early days of spring, when the sudden atmospheric changes are very detrimental, and frequently fatal to the growing caterpillars.

SOUTH AFRICA.—According to the latest advices from Cape Town fighting is still going on between the colonists and the rebels in South Africa. The latter have not yet availed themselves of the amnesty offered them as it was expected they would have done, but their hesitation is attributed to the fact that their chiefs are excluded from its benefits. Several recent outrages have been committed by the natives, and at the time the telegraphic despatches left Cape Town the position of affairs seemed to be a grave one.



[PERCY GOES FOR A MEMORABLE WALK.]

BOUND TO THE TRAWL.

By the Author of "Clytie Cranbourne," "The Golden Bowl," "Poor Loo," etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

KATIE IS DRIVEN ONWARD.

Foul jealousy, that turnest love divine
To joyless dread, and mak'st the loving heart
With hateful thoughts to languish and to pine.

SPENSER.

THREE months have passed since Katie Jessop came to Deadlake School, and during that time the event, the approach of which had necessitated an assistant schoolmistress, had come to pass, Mrs. Fretwell had added one more to the number of Her Majesty's subjects, and presented her husband with a son and heir.

What he will inherit is a question for the future, at present he certainly does possess a powerful pair of lungs, a fact which he impresses painfully upon everyone who approaches him.

Young as he is, however, having only opened his eyes upon this changeful world a little over six weeks, he has his prejudices and favourites, and among the latter is Katie Jessop.

"See how he smiles on you," said Mr. Fretwell one day, when, Katie having paid a visit to his wife from a feeling of duty rather than inclination, was dandling the little creature in her arms; "he shows his good taste, and will probably be like his father, an admirer of beauty."

A silly speech to make, but Mr. Fretwell was a foolish man, and Katie had turned her head away, and would have taken no notice of it, had not the jealous wife caught the baby from her arms and pressed it so tightly to her breast as to make the infant scream.

The girl looked at the excited mother in

amazement, and was still more astonished when she said:

"I don't want to lose my child as well as my husband. Of course you came to see me to-day, not them, Miss Jessop, and, of course, I am exceedingly obliged to you," with a malignant smile, and a curtsy, "though I should have thought 'twould have been better, had you been a right-minded young woman, to have got a husband of your own instead of sneaking after another woman's."

From white to red and red to white Katie Jessop's face turned.

She, who kept herself as far as mortal woman could do, "unspotted from the world."

She, who had schooled her very thoughts, casting away from them all that was impure, who, even in her dreams of Percy Rosburn, her ideal man, ignored all that was gross and sensual.

She, to be taxed in this manner by a vulgar woman.

The insult was overwhelming, and for a second or two she could not breathe.

Before she could speak, Mr. Fretwell was manly enough to interfere.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Cecilia," he exclaimed. "You are going mad with your senseless jealousy; no sane woman would act or speak as you do. I hope you will excuse her, Miss Jessop."

Katie bowed, uttering no word, and walked to the door; it was not a case for discussion, she had paid her last visit to Mrs. Fretwell.

Accounts which came out later stated that the scene of reproach and recrimination between husband and wife, was loud, long, and bitter, but Katie did not hear it, and when, later in the day, Mr. Fretwell crossed the yard and asked for Miss Jessop, old Sue informed him with a grin, that she was—what the quality people would call "not at home."

Rebuffed, and certainly not more amiable with his wife in consequence, the schoolmaster returned to his own house, replenished his purse, crushed on his hat, and started for London,

whence he did not return until the next morning, just before the time for school to open.

That his wife aggravated matters in every way by sending to Katie demanding her husband, and scouring the neighbourhood for him, it is almost needless to say.

The character of the woman would suggest such conduct, and the girl, finding her life with these people simply intolerable, sent a line to Colonel Chartres begging him to come to her.

"What is it, my dear? Something has occurred to put you out, Katie."

Then she told her story, adding that she really thought Mrs. Fretwell was mad.

"Mad she must be," assented her friend; "but this cannot go on, they must leave or you must."

"I will go," was the decisive observation; then with some hesitation she went on:

"I haven't told you of something else I have been doing; I didn't mean to let you know about it until I had made quite a success. But this alters the case, and I think I may be able to live without teaching—in a school, at least. Have you ever seen these?"

And she laid before him some magazines, in which short stories and poems were marked with the initials K. J.

"Yes, I have seen them, Percy brought them to the Willows, and we all thought them uncommonly clever; but you don't mean to say that K. J. meant Katie Jessop?"

"It did," with blushing smiles.

"Well, I am surprised: and how did you get them published?"

"I don't know quite. Mr. Rosburn writes for magazines and newspapers, and when I asked his advice, he told me to send them to him, and he would see if they were worth printing, and then to my surprise I got a letter from an editor, saying he would take them and asking me to write more. I can't describe the sensation I felt when my first proofs came, it was so strange to see what I had read and thought over in print; and then I had all this money sent me, a cheque for twenty pounds, for

just three stories and two poems, as much as a whole year's salary, but how shall I change it."

"I will do that for you; but you surprise me, my dear. I am delighted—my little Katie an authoress; really I am quite proud of you, child. If only my poor Basil had been alive."

"Poor dear Basil," said the girl, sadly, and with a sigh. "It was all through him that I ever began to write. He used to think me so clever and so wonderful, and when I gave him my first little poem to read, the tears were in his eyes with sympathy at the touching story, and we used to invent tales and tell them to each other, and I would sometimes write them down; that was really Basil's more than mine, and a good deal of it was true," and she pointed to her most successful poem: "The Workhouse Waif."

Tears were in the bereaved father's eyes, but he dashed them aside as he said:

"I have not given up all hope. A boat was picked up that had drifted out to sea on that very night of the murder; it was found miles away from shore; there were bloodstains on it; my boy might have been in it and been saved, there was just the chance, and I can't help clinging to the hope."

"I pray that it is so," said the girl, but in her own heart she had no hope, she believed most firmly that Basil Rosburn had been murdered by George Crabtree.

"What I was going to ask you," she said, reverting to the topic of their conversation, "is, don't you think I shall be able to make money enough, and do more good by writing than by teaching. It isn't the children themselves, but the teachers and people connected with a school that make such a life disagreeable."

"Certainly, though Mr. and Mrs. Fretwell are not representatives of the class. But the question is, where can you live? I should like you to come to the Willows, but it might not be quite comfortable."

"Oh, no, I couldn't go there, and I couldn't go home to Great Barmouth. Uncle Chris is married, and there is really no home for me now. I thought perhaps Mrs. Chater might know a respectable family who had two rooms to let at a moderate rent. I shall have to a certain extent to explain some things to her."

"Best leave that to me, dear; we will say nothing about that woman's unfounded jealousy, when you are away it will die out, and the man isn't worth speaking to; I'll see Mrs. Chater, and make what arrangements I can; but I'm proud of you, Katie, very proud."

And again he kissed the girl's fair forehead. Perhaps he admired her independence as much as her talent, for had he not offered to adopt her as his daughter, instead of accepting which, she was labouring on with hand and brain to earn her living, and to do what good she could to her fellow creatures.

It was a phase of life which the Colonel with his wealth was unused to, his experience rather being that whenever he offered anything it was not only accepted, but more was exacted than he intended to give.

An hour or two later a note came from the clergyman's wife, asking the young school teacher to come up and see her at once.

"I had no idea we had such a young genius among us," she said, embracing Katie effusively. "To think that you should have written that lovely poem. I quite cried over it. I was never more surprised in my life. I think Colonel Chartres is quite right, you ought not to waste your time in teaching rough children when you can do so much better, and it just happens that I know a little place that will suit you as a home for the present."

Katie expressed her thanks, and Mrs. Chater went on:

"Old Sue's daughter was married two or three years ago; she has a pretty little house, looking on the common; her husband is a gardener; and she has two rooms which she lets; sometimes young men from the universities in the vacation lodge with her when

they are reading hard. It will just suit you; there is a good view of the river as well as of the heath. I suppose you and the Fretwells don't get on very well?"

This last was sudden. Mrs. Chater heard a great deal of gossip from old Sue, and knew far more than Katie imagined, but the old colonel, like a wise man of the world, said nothing about the schoolmistress's jealousy, for, though he knew Katie must be quite innocent in the matter, he was also conscious that many people would say, "there was never smoke without fire," and that even a hint of the kind would be injurious to the girl.

"No," replied Katie, "I don't quite understand them, and teaching is much more fatiguing work than I imagined, besides, I think a teacher should be trained for her occupation. I have discovered that I may know a great deal, and yet not be able to teach a little well. I don't think school-teaching is my vocation."

"So it seems," said the lady, disappointed at not having led her to abuse the Fretwells. "You are a relative of Colonel Chartres, are you not?" next asked the woman, whose curiosity was one of her worst faults.

"No, none whatever."

"He takes a very great interest in you then."

"Yes, he is very kind indeed; we knew his son, but I would rather not talk of the subject, please, it would pain him very much to have it alluded to."

A statement, that, while it increased Mrs. Chater's curiosity, likewise silenced her.

But she was a kind-hearted woman in her way, fond of patronising rising genius or talent, or helplessness or poverty, and of making the world think how remarkably good she was, and though she knew pretty well how matters stood at the school-house she thought it was better for Katie to go than for the Fretwells.

They were the most useful, and could manage the school, whereas the girl, single-handed, could not, and experience had taught her the difficulty of providing master and mistress who would not either quarrel or become so fond of each other that her husband's services or that of one of his curates in his official capacity was at length needed to adjust matters.

Besides, she felt that the girl was born for something better than to grind out her life in the service of rough children, and thus, before they separated for the night, it was decided that, on the following Saturday, it being Wednesday now, Katie should resign her position, and leave the school-house.

"And you had better remain here to-night, dear," said the clergyman's wife, as the girl looked at her watch—a present from the colonel.

"It is very kind of you, but I am afraid Sue will be sitting up for me."

"She knew you were coming here, didn't she?"

"Yes, I told her."

"Then she will know you are all right. I will order your breakfast to be in time in the morning, and you can come into my dressing-room to say good-bye to me before you start."

To which Katie assented, little dreaming of the horrible fate from which this mere caprice of her good natured patroness would perhaps save her.

Perhaps, I say, for who can tell whether or not Mrs. Chater's testimony and that of her household will be strong enough to shield her.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PERCY ROXBURN IS DISSATISFIED.

Indeed you thank'd me; but a nobler gratitude Rose in her soul, for from that hour she loved me.

It is Sunday morning, and Katie Jessop is in her new house, looking out upon the Common, upon which the ever blooming gorse shows its rich, golden flower, while the river, like an old friend, reminding her of the companion of her

youth, the sea, winds its placid, serpent-like course, beyond.

The gorse and the river are Katie's great sights.

"I will love you while the gorse is in blossom," said a lady once to her exacting lover.

And the foolish fellow went away with bitterness in his heart, believing all women to be fickle, till years afterwards he learnt that the gorse was always in blossom, summer and winter, springtide and autumn; then he hastened back to his love, who, true to her word, loved, and was constant to him still.

This story was often uppermost in Katie's mind, as from her bed and sitting-room windows she looked at the gorse, and she thought with a smile that she would not have been so constant herself; being deserted and doubted, she would have ceased to love, or would have bestowed her heart upon some less insipid object.

"I could never love a man who doubted me," she thought, proudly, as she unconsciously flung back her head with a gesture of pride, "never! But why do I think of love? I must not dream the dreams are roses. I have but two things to work for, to do good, and to win fame, the last not a very noble ambition perhaps, and not very easy of attainment."

She started and her cheek flushed, for, making his way over the heath towards her was the figure of a man; that for her own peace of mind, she knew but too well.

On he came, with a firm, free step, and before she could distinguish his powerfully-formed figure and prematurely grey hair, she knew they were there, and her heart beat fast and painfully as he came nearer.

But she did not go out to meet him.

As he approached nearer she stepped back into the room so that he might not see her, then came his imperious knock at the door, his question as to whether Miss Jessop lived there or not, and a second or two later he was standing before her.

They shook hands, not without embarrassment, for though many letters had passed between them on the subject of Katie's literary work, they had only met two or three times since that day when he had stayed with her at the railway station, and on each occasion it had been by accident, or at any rate through no plan or arrangement of their own.

This then was the first time that Percy Rosburn had actually sought her, so no wonder the simple girl's cheek flushed and her pulse beat high as he came into her presence.

"I heard of your change of residence from my uncle," he said, when they had shaken hands, "so as you are no longer under other people's orders, I thought I would walk out and see you."

"Walk out," repeated the girl, glad to talk on any trivial subject to hide her embarrassment; "surely you haven't walked from London?"

"Indeed I have, a long walk does me a world of good. Have you been out to-day? Good girl," with a light laugh; "suppose now you come for a walk with me, and tell me what the parson told you; it will be second-hand, but I don't think it will do me less good on that account."

"As though I could remember the whole sermon. I will go for a walk with pleasure, but perhaps you are hungry."

"Yes and no; but I'm thirsty; if your landlady will give me some bread and cheese and a glass of ale while you get on your hat, I shall consider her a treasure. I am going to dine at the Willows this evening."

"Indeed; so am I," said Katie, and she looked at her watch.

"Are you really?" asked Percy, opening his eyes.

"Yes, your uncle sent me a note last night from Mrs. Garland, but written by Minnie, asking me to dinner. Colonel Chartres said he would walk over this afternoon and fetch me, so I must not stay out very long with you."

"No," said the young man slowly, then he added, "perhaps it will be too much fatigue for you to go with me first."

"Oh, no. I am used to walking, I thought nothing of a walk of ten miles before I came to

London. I won't be more than a minute or two getting on my hat, and here is your ale and bread and cheese, not a luxurious luncheon, but it is what you asked for."

"And all I want, thanks."

Then he was left alone.

Thirsty though he might be, he did not proceed to eat.

Scarcely had the door closed upon the girl than he rose to his feet, planted his legs apart, his hands in his trousers pockets, set his face in something more than a frown, and muttered:

"Satan!"

Not a nice adjuration; but the young man was, as he termed it, "sold."

Sold by himself, too, he had no one else to blame.

He had no evil intentions towards poor little Katie, do not for one moment imagine it; but neither had he the least intention of marrying her, and what was more, he did not wish her or his uncle, or anyone else, to even entertain such an idea.

Only the very last time that his uncle talked of Katie to him, her goodness, amiability, and talent had been enlarged upon, and how, the younger man scarcely knew; but he found himself assuring his relative that the girl was as sacred to him as his own sister, and that whatever he had done or might do to help her in her literary career was out of sheer appreciation of her many merits, and with no thought of reward in any possible way except the consciousness of having lent a helping hand to a woman who needed and deserved it.

At which the older man grasped his nephew's hand, told him the days of chivalry were not all gone, and that true-hearted knights fought for innocence and virtue still.

After which, in the fulness of his heart he communicated the information that, though Katie might work as hard as she liked now, she was provided for in the future; that if his son Basil ever should be found and proved innocent Katie would be his wife, and if not, the bulk of the colonel's property would be equally divided between the girl who should have been his daughter and his nephew, Percy Rossburn.

All this Percy had listened to and commented upon, and anyone to hear him would have thought him the most unlikely man in the world to have come on the very following Sunday in the guise of a lover.

This character was not what he meant to assume, however, and but that his uncle would know of his visit, and he and Katie were both of them to dine at the same house that night, he might not even have thought of the significance that might be attached to his presence here.

The matter was so perplexing, however, that he forgot all about his luncheon in his attempts to devise some means of escape from the position in which he had placed himself, and when Katie returned to the room ready dressed for their walk, she found the food and ale untouched.

"What is the matter? Is anything wrong?" she asked, anxiously.

Percy looked at her, and replied:

"She might not be a lady, but she was very lovely; there was also a certain refinement and grace about her which rarely belongs to those not gently born and bred, and he remembered that he had learnt in Great Barmouth that Katie's father was a man of good family, who had offended his relatives by marrying Chris Crowler's sister, and who, taking his young wife with him, and leaving his child behind while he went to fill some appointment abroad, was drowned, or rather the fate of the ship was never known.

One thing only being certain, that she did not reach her destination."

Then it was that Christopher Crowler adopted his niece, and sent to ask Meg Toppam, his cousin and nearest relation, to come and take care of the child, and keep house for him, and this was the reason, perhaps, why the little orphan had always been allowed to have her own way, and follow her own course in life.

Such had been the explanation, at any rate, given to the young barrister, and it explained

much which otherwise to his mind and from his standpoint of thought would have seemed enigmatical.

All this presented no reason for his entangling himself in any serious engagement with Katie, and though he admired her, and as I have said, meant her no wrong, he was by no means prepared to marry her.

With this in view, he had meant to excuse himself and get away, but when she presented herself, a woman in all the charm of bloom and maidenhood, he felt his resolution weak and unstable as water, and muttering some excuse, he drank the ale, ate a mouthful of the bread and cheese, then declared himself ready to start.

"As handsome a couple as ever I did see," Katie's landlady remarked, as the two walked away from her abode.

But if they were handsome the couple did not feel comfortable.

A restraint which neither could quite explain had come over both, and was much more dangerous, had they only known it, than the most light-hearted badinage and frivolity.

Silence was upon them, silence more dangerous and more eloquent than speech.

Katie could think of nothing to say, and Percy, man of the world as he was, found every subject that presented itself to his mind unsuitable for conversation.

Had Katie been experienced in the ways of the masculine mind, or in angling for and landing a husband, she would undoubtedly have led Percy Rossburn to propose to her this morning, but she was not, and she would have scorned to use the power even had she known she possessed it, and thus the two drifted on; two rivers side by side with only a bank of ambition and social prejudice between them, yet flowing on, perhaps not to join in one deep stream till both meet in the ocean of eternity whither they are both bound.

Percy Rossburn was not at his ease; had he meant to take a decided course anyway it would have been different, but he did not, he wanted to enjoy Katie's fresh companionship without paying for it either socially or morally, and he found himself very like a boy who puts his hand in the fire to grasp a toy, expecting not to be burnt.

So they walked on side by side along the river's bank, a subtle charm even in the silence falling upon their hearts, until the girl said she thought it was time to return, and they turned their faces homewards.

Had he dared, Percy would have asked her not to mention the fact of his having called upon or seen her that day, but though he tried more than once, he could not frame his lips to utter anything so mean, and it was well he did not, it would have been labour in vain. Katie would never have forgiven him, and more than that, Colonel Chartres met them a few seconds after they came in sight of the girl's home.

"I was wondering who you could have gone out with, Katie," said the elder man, cheerfully. "I'm glad to find it's my nephew; you couldn't be in better company."

Then he shook hands with both, and they strolled about talking together.

"I shall not be more than a quarter of an hour dressing," said the girl at last, consulting her watch; "will you come in and have a cup of tea and wait for me?"

"No, we will take a smoke and a stroll," replied the colonel as he led his nephew away.

"How unlike they are to each other," mused Katie, regarding them from her window ere she began to dress, "and how strange that I should have anything to do with them."

Then she thought of poor Basil, and of George Crabtree, and wondered if either or both of them were still alive.

(To be Continued.)

By revenging yourself on your enemy, you make him your equal; by pardoning him, you show yourself his superior.

HER GUIDING STAR;

OR,

LOVE AND TREACHERY.

CHAPTER XXII.

COUSIN HARRY'S confession was as follows:

"You have not known, Jessie, nor I, much longer than since you came here, that a darling object of our grandfather was to unite us. It was natural enough that he should desire it. It would draw closer the few family links left, would keep his fine fortune unbroken, and secure to himself in his old age the society and care of those dearest to him. This desire was strengthened, of course, by your presence. Oh, you have no idea of the fondness and pride with which he regards you, and the efforts he has made to inspire me with his own admiration!"

"Nor of your indifference!" interrupted Jessie, archly.

"Oh, no, not indifference, dear cousin; I had no heart to give."

Jessie uttered an exclamation, and could not suppress a sigh.

"Ah," thought she, "poor Harry; now I do, indeed, feel for you."

"Nothing," he continued, "could have preserved me from an attachment which I now see would have been hopeless but a pre-engagement of my honour and affection. And now, how shall I venture to say to whom? how ask your sympathy for one so far below you?"

Jessie started. She began to fear the confidence to which she had so readily assented.

"Neither fortune nor family."

"Oh, said Jessie, much relieved, "if that be all! But tell me, tell me who she is."

"Let me go back to the beginning. She is the child of humble parents, was born in my grandfather's house, and remained there the first three years of her life."

"What? Rachel Austin?"

"The same. Are you mortified for me, Jessie?"

"Not mortified, but—but surprised, said she, too honest to conceal her feelings, and Henry proceeded:

"Both motherless children, we seemed instinctively drawn towards each other—just difference enough in our ages to make her my plaything, and me, her protector. A sister of her father came from Cumberland to live with him, and the child left us. But my aunt's interest in her continued; and, from time to time, she came to her for better instruction than she could get elsewhere. If she was industrious, her reward was to remain for an hour's play with me; and when I was in especial favour, my reward was to, pass a day at the Wheat Farm. So the time passed till I was sent to school, and then to college—my vacations always the more welcome, because I should again see Rachel."

"And my grandfather and aunt—had they no fears, no suspicions?"

"My grandfather, at that time an active politician, was too much occupied to observe attentively what a mere boy was doing. Besides which, as I grew older, I became more cautious, and confined my intercourse with her to such times and places as would excite no remark."

"As to my aunt, she was an invalid, and had few opportunities of observation. Thus it went on till my final return home; and then, though with continually-increasing affection, I formed no purpose, had no plan for the future. I thought only of seeing her; of the pleasure of being with her. I had never even mentioned love to her, though I could not but feel that that there was but one heart between us. At length I was roused from this dreamy happiness by the rumour of a lover urged on her by her father, and I resolved to secure her. My grandfather's consent to our marriage was impossible."

"The very suggestion would be an offence scarcely pardonable. A clandestine one, sure to be discovered, would be only an aggravated crime. In this situation—a madman and an idiot!" continued he, with startling violence—"bent to make her my own on any terms, I tried—I proposed, in a moment when her yielding tenderness gave me courage, a solemn written contract, to be fulfilled when I should be my own master. But," added he, hesitating, and covering his face with his hands, "but, though my—wife in fact, for the present no—no marriage."

Jessie turned faint; she had heard enough and too much. The guilty embarrassment of Henry left no doubt of his meaning. He was in her presence a self-convicted betrayer of an innocent, confiding girl.

Without attempting to speak she endeavoured to rise and leave the room, but he caught her hand and almost forced her to be seated.

"Stay, Jessie! you have not heard all. Heaven and Rachel saved me from the wicked folly I was ready to commit."

Jessie breathed more freely; raised her eyes with a look expressive of thankfulness, but could not speak.

"Yes; she, hitherto the gentlest and most loving creature, spurned not only my proposal, but myself! Yes, spurned me! Oh, you cannot know, even if you had seen her, the spirit that kindles those dark eyes when roused! I was banished. No entreaties, no prayers could obtain my pardon, nor even a glimpse of her. At length, after repeated attempts to see her, I was informed that she had gone with her aunt to Cumberland. Gone ostensibly to attend a yearly meeting of their sect, but, as I well knew, to avoid me. Her aunt returned without her. Their friends had pressed Rachel to remain, and she did so, till not long since."

"And then? were you allowed to see her?"

"See her! yes, but to no purpose. You recollect, perhaps, the evening when my absence from home caused some uneasiness?"

"Yes, perfectly; what then?"

"That evening she consented to see me. Up to that time, notwithstanding my grandfather's desires—almost his commands—and my own growing affection for you, my dear cousin, I never wavered in my fidelity to Rachel. The object of this interview was to implore her to consent to an immediate private union, trusting by thus hazarding everything, to atone for my offence, and to secure her."

"And her answer?"

"Decided and inexorable; and we parted. Despair, together with resentment, now stimulated me, and I resolved to conform to my grandfather's wishes. You know what a wretched business I made of it, and will now understand why I could not even desire success. I gain, indeed, nothing by my failure but time—time, yet to make peace with Rachel; perhaps to obtain her consent; and, on the part of my grandfather, his relinquishment of a purpose he will now see to be impracticable."

Jessie had listened with the deepest interest. Extending her hand to Henry, restored to her confidence by the sacrifice at which he was willing to atone for his fault, she said:

"I am so glad, my cousin, that I can love you still. Yet I have a thought that will burn out my heart if I do not speak it. It is not for me to decide between your duty to grandpapa and what is due to Rachel. I can but admire your courage and generosity. But I have somewhat against you, for all that. What right had you to consider that my whole heart, without which I would marry no man, was fairly obtained by the mere offer of an unwilling hand? Had you gained my affections, what had you to give me in exchange? Nothing! which I was, of course, to find out to my sorrow. No, no, Cousin Henry, it is bad, it is wicked, thus to trifle with love. Burn no false fire on that altar."

He felt the rebuke.

"Dear Jessie, it was base, it was unmanly; I see it now as never before; but be merciful, and forgive me."

"I have already done so. There is nothing so enervating, so treacherous, so cruel, as fear. Alas! that grandpapa, with all his affection for you, should have held you in subjection to this bondage. But let the past be past. My sympathy is yours, and my respect for Rachel you cannot doubt. How far she is fitted for the position you would give her, of course, I cannot judge."

"Ah!" said Henry, with a smile, "you cannot, my sweet cousin, from your height, see far enough into my lowly little Quaker girl to do her justice. But you will, by-and-bye, I am sure, or you are not so good as I believe you to be. It is unreasonable, though, to detain you longer. It is time you should retire. Oh, you cannot know how much good you have done me! No, no," added he, interpreting rightly her arch smile, "not by your rejection, but by your sympathy. Good-night, dear Jessie."

They parted—Henry to ponder on his grandfather's reception of his failure, Jessie to "moralise the spectacle" in her own way.

With her associations and education she could not but be somewhat shocked by so incongruous a union.

But, though trained in habits of filial respect and obedience, hers had been "a reasonable service"—not under the iron rule of the preceding generation, nor yet lowered to the modern familiarity, by which a perfect equality is established between parent and child.

She could, therefore, see the conflict of duties in the present case, and the enfeebling effect on a naturally generous and manly temper of a system that inspired no confidence.

"Ah!" thought she, "how differently would one that I know have acted under such circumstances. If opposed in a virtuous attachment, how bravely would he have avowed his love; how would gold have melted away before it; how would rank have burst like a bubble. No crooked path would he have trod—no timid course pursued. But, after all, Cousin Henry is to be pitied, perhaps, more than blamed; and if this little lady is really what he fancies, I do hope he will have the courage to marry her like a man."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE next morning the breakfast passed cheerfully.

No cloud rose even "as big as a man's hand."

Mr. Fannuir, understanding that the young people had had a long evening to themselves, concluded that, if Harry were not a booby, he had opened the business, and, if so, their present amicable relation justified a hope of the happiest result.

In this belief, he directed his grandson to attend his toilet.

A few words served to demolish the castle that years had built.

At first it was difficult to say where the bolt of his anger would fall—on Jessie for refusing, or on Henry for being refused.

When, however, the family met at dinner, a more discriminating justice than was to be expected directed it entirely against Jessie, who, though aware that her decision would pain her grandfather, had no apprehension of the manner in which it would be evinced. This was not doubtful.

Instead of the greeting, at once kind and playful, with which he usually seated her at a table, she took a place unheeded.

No nice morsel solicitously selected, and sent to her unasked.

Instead of the accustomed glass of wine with her grandfather, not a word was addressed to her.

She was, in short, made to feel as much as possible, by negotiations of every kind, how entirely the sun of her favour was set. Not that this was really so.

Mr. Fannuir could not so easily abandon a cherished project.

He flattered himself Jessie's refusal was a mere girlish freak to prove her power, or that Henry had been precipitate, and that a little

more time and intercourse would excite the corresponding feeling on her part.

Of Harry's indifference he had not the least suspicion.

He thought him, indeed, not so passionate a wooer as he himself would be in the like case; but oh, had he known the fact.

Still hoping for success, he thought that, in the meantime, it would not be amiss to show Jessie, by the temporary withdrawal of his favour, how much it was really worth.

It would be difficult to say who suffered most by the experiment, Jessie or his grandson. She, grieved and oppressed, the tears ready to fall from eyes that she did not dare to turn toward Mr. Fannuir, her dinner nearly untouched, yet not presuming to leave the table, sat like a culprit; while Henry, unprepared for this displeasure, felt self-condemned that he did not share it with her.

The cloth was removed, but no cordiality nor pleasantry succeeded.

No remembrance of "absent friends" to draw the nearer those who were present.

Only a joyless formality, unbroken except by an occasional remark addressed to his daughter or to Henry—never to Jessie.

Unable longer to endure this, she left the table as soon as was admissible, taking refuge in the drawing-room, whence a view of the river suggested to her an escape, on which she was reflecting, when Henry, with a distressed countenance, entered.

"Jessie," said he "I cannot bear this. I will confess everything. It is base to let you suffer when I am the only one in fault. I will at least share your disgrace."

"No, no, on no account. To involve you would not help me. I suffer, 'tis true, unjustly, but still for my own act, which nothing that you could have done would have prevented. Be easy; you are guiltless in regard to me. Nay, I insist on your silence. In a few days I shall be at home, and shall forget these troubles. By-and-bye, when the storm has passed, I'll come again, if grandpapa will let me. In the meantime, you must come to us, and I will introduce you to some pleasant people and we will have merry times again."

But her amiable efforts to console him only increased his concern.

The idea of her leaving them was intolerable.

She had "made it sunshine in a shady place."

He had known a pleasure in her companionship he could not now do without, especially in the involvement of his present anxiety; but, declaring her departure imperative, Jessie retired to her room to write to her mother. Here she had seated herself before a gentle tap announced her aunt.

"My dear child," she said, "I am so grieved! Papa has told me all. Poor Harry! I know not which is most to be pitied, he or myself."

Jessie could not suppress a smile.

"Dear aunt, trust me that Cousin Henry will not die of a broken heart on my account; and you, I hope, will find consolation in some one much better than your insensible niece."

"Oh no, Jessie, never. You cannot comprehend the happiness you have shed on my solitary life. The hope of keeping you here has been to me like the fabulous elixir. But you were about to write—not to your mother?"

"Yes; to inform her of my return."

"That is just what I am sent to prevent. Papa desires she may not know what has passed, and that you will not think of leaving Glenwater at present."

"Oh, I must go!"

"But, my dear! The wishes of papa are commands, you know."

"Commands!" repeated Jessie; "commands that I shall not go, nor write to my own mother!"

"Yes, even so; here his word is law."

"Oh, dear aunt! perhaps 'tis disrespectful to say so, but I cannot help it. You've all made grandpapa a tyrant by your slavish fears. He would be just and reasonable, I am sure, had he

not been spoiled by this irrational submission. Do, dearest aunt, be a little more resolute for his sake."

Miss Fannmuir did not answer, and Jessie saw, by her closed eyes and contracted brow, that some painful thought occupied her.

"'Tis too late! too late!" said she, at length, rather reflecting than speaking to another; "Life has passed me by; I cannot now arrest the stream. If I have made a mistake, it has not been wholly from the weakness you ascribe it to. But let us speak of yourself, Jessie. By complying with papa's request you will soothe his present irritation; by refusing, you will reopen the breach with your parents so lately closed. This, I think, will reconcile you to the surrender of your own wishes. As to Henry, he will not be deceived into a vain hope by your remaining; he will understand that it is compulsory."

"Oh," said Jessie, with an irrepressible laugh, "I am not deterred by fear of any such consequence. Harry and I perfectly comprehend each other."

Miss Fannmuir cast a glance on her, half-reproachful, and, rising, said:

"Well, my dear, you will at least allow me to tell papa that you consent?"

"Yes, with one reserve. I will not write. I will remain, but not to be treated as I was to-day. I wish never to fail in respect and obedience to grandpapa; and, therefore, I dare not subject myself to what I know I could not patiently bear."

To complicate matters the gout appeared—the result of nervous agitation—and Mr. Fannmuir was confined to his chamber.

Jessie sent to beg she might be admitted to read, as usual, but the offer was declined, and in such a manner that it was plain she would not soon be permitted to have the privilege.

Mrs. Marley very humbly proffered her services, but only to be rejected.

At length, after pondering and hesitating, she ventured to say:

"I do believe I have thought of what may suit you, sir. Suppose you try Rachel Austin, sir."

"Rachel Austin! Pshaw! nonsense! She'd drive me mad!"

"Why, sir, she's an excellent reader! Miss Fannmuir took ever so much pains with her, and she came every day to read to her when she used to be so poorly. Dear me! I'm sure nobody'd a thought then that she'd live to see this day! You haven't forgot that time, sir, I'm sure."

"No, woman!" exclaimed Mr. Fannmuir, violently; "and, if I had, you would never cease to remind me. No; I won't have Rachel Austin!"

Her habitual fear overcome by her real desire to relieve him, Mrs. Marley ventured a little farther, and suggested that Mr. Henry might ask her to come "just on trial."

But Henry, alarmed at the idea of such an embassy, certain, too, to fail in his hands, answered, hastily:

"No, no, Mrs. Marley, that will never do; she won't come."

These few words settled the matter.

"Won't come! won't come!" repeated Mr. Fannmuir, "when I send! a girl who owes everything to us! I'd like to see her refuse! Go to her this instant, Henry, and tell her to come to me. I'll try her, if only to punish her pride."

There was nothing to be done but to appear to obey; when, to his great relief, Miss Fannmuir undertook to despatch a note, which, she doubted not, would bring her; and while this on its way it may not be amiss to peep into the neat little domicile whither it is travelling.

About two miles from Glenwater was the "Wheat Farm."

John Austin, its occupant, a Quaker, had by industry and thrift arrived at what to him was competence—a respectable living, with something "laid by for a rainy day."

He had at first a hard struggle; but Mr. Fannmuir, of whom he had taken a long lease on easy terms, had been not only an indulgent landlord, but a good friend.

The dwelling was a very temple of neatness, of which Sarah Austin and Rachel were the priestesses; and Phoebe, an orphan girl, at first taken for charity, now their only help, was a faithful ministrant.

Sarah Austin, a woman of sense and feeling, with a good plain education, had been, though not a preacher, an occasional exhorter, when so "moved."

This gave to her manner and language an increased precision, to which was added an attachment to her sect that narrowed her views of the "world's people."

By this last her niece was unaffected, though she had naturally caught something of the former.

Her brother, not less honest, was more liberal.

He had seen sufficient cause to believe that goodness was not found only under a broad brim and a drab coat; and, while an attentive observer of the forms of a people who profess to discard form, he did not believe in their essential importance.

On the afternoon alluded to, Rachel and her aunt—the day's work over—were in their quiet little "sitting-room," the window of which, opening to the poet's corner, the sweet south-west, disclosed a small flower-garden spread beneath them.

Here, as if that instinct of beauty implanted in the human breast would vindicate itself, were to be seen the gayest combinations of colours; and sober eyes, that turned from all the glories of earth, could not shut out the gorgeous hues and the brilliant lights of the evening sky.

On the hearth the kettle gave note of preparation for their early tea.

The floor, white and scantily carpeted, and the polished pine tables, attested the patient labours of Phoebe.

At every door little mats of list—home manufactured—mounted guard to defend the sacred precincts from gravel and soil.

Chairs of the prevailing straight, high-backed form, but of inexpensive wood, well oiled, were a good substitute for mahogany.

There was literally no article of ornament in the room.

On one side hung a map of Great Britain, on the other was a small press, the upper part a bookcase, containing their literary staple, with drawers below, whose brass handles shone resplendent.

From a volume in Sarah's hand, she was reading aloud to Rachel, seated by her side, sewing "fine linen" for her father, who, despising "embroidery and vain apparel," moderately indulged in this luxury.

The passage selected was a portion of the beautiful letter addressed by Penn to his wife and children previous to his first embarkation for America.

"Hearken, Rachel," said her aunt, "to this godly and wise man. 'Agriculture I especially commend. Let my children be husbandmen and housewives; it is industrious, healthy, honest, and of good example. Like Abraham and the holy ancients, who pleased Heaven and obtained a good report.'"

"Yes," said Rachel; "he was, I doubt not, a wise man, and as full of love as of wisdom; for in the conclusion of this same letter those tender words meet us, that have always dwelt in my memory. 'Yours,' he saith to his wife, 'yours in that which no waters can quench, no time forget, nor distance wear away, but remaineth for ever!'"

"But thou must remember, Rachel," said Sarah, with a scrutinising look, "that the love of which he thus speaketh was bred of a godly mind; and observe, farther, how he enforceth this. For, advising of his children, he saith, 'When marriageable, see that they have worthy persons in their eye; of good life, and good fame for piety and understanding.' Now, by 'understanding,' it is manifest that he meant not carnal gifts; for what doth Scripture say?—'A good understanding have all they that love thy law.'"

Rachel, not inclined to a conversation the ten-

dency whereof she was well aware, was glad to be relieved by the entrance of a servant with a note from Miss Fannmuir. Sarah observed her closely.

She marked her varying colour and startled look.

But Rachel, taught to control her emotions, soon recovered her usual calm exterior, and, having dismissed the servant to await her answer, she handed the note to her aunt. She read it, and returned it without comment, saying:

"Is the young man Henry at home?"

"Not often, I think. He spendeth much time in the woods, and on the river."

"Verily, a gainful occupation!" replied Sarah, coldly. "Slaughtering His harmless creatures for his amusement."

Now it is not to be inferred that she disliked Henry.

She had, indeed, often rebuked his taste for what she considered murderous sports, held in abhorrence by her sect; yet once, when her brother had been left by a wasting fever with a sickly appetite, she gladly received the frequent bag of game, nor scrupulously counted the little lives that went to fill it.

Nor would anyone so surely raise a smile on her habitually grave face as "the young man Henry."

But those days were past.

A woman's instinct, surer than "Suspicion's hundred eyes," had alarmed her for her niece and, together with her desire to promote her marriage with a thriving young Quaker suitor, led her to discourage an intimacy which she feared could only produce unhappiness.

For this reason she had favoured the long sojourn among their distant friends; and, perceiving that Henry's visits were not renewed, she hoped the danger was passed. The request of Miss Fannmuir was therefore as unpleasant as unexpected.

Rachel did not reply to her aunt's unfavourable observation, but looked perplexed and uneasy.

"I see," said Sarah, "that thy spirit is troubled within thee. Thou hast a divided mind between duty to thy friend Janet and to thyself."

(To be Continued.)

THE WHISPERS OF NORMAN CHASE.

CHAPTER XLVII.

And she shall be sole victress.

RICHARD III.

It was now drawing near to the rich season of the year.

Evelyn, with the young heiress of Fairleigh, was walking in one of the tinted alleys of Norman Chase. In her hand she held a letter.

"I know," she said, "dear Augusta, nothing of what it means, but I feel sure the writer is sincere. He signs no name, yet he says: 'From this hour put away your fears. There is no man living who can henceforth harm you or yours.' I don't understand why a sense of security, long unfelt, has come over me. And you, my sweet child (how she could patronise, this Evelyn of eighteen, a girl not six months younger than herself), 'it is splendid to think that the wretch Maxwell has been outwitted, and that your fortune is once more all your own.'"

"It gives me no happiness now," replied Augusta, though she would not, for the life of her, have confessed why.

"Ungrateful girl. Don't you see who is coming up the drive to congratulate you? You are far happier than I am, Augusta."

The heiress of Fairleigh looked through the great oriel, whose traceries towered above those

two golden beads, and behold! there was Stanley Hope riding fast up the avenue—saw him dismount: heard him ask:

"Is Lady Norman at home? Is Miss Hedley with her? Is Miss Fairleigh here?" and instead of brightening with pleasure, flushed with indignation.

"I will not see him," she said. "I will go to my room. Do not try to make me meet him, Evelyn."

A tap at the door, and a servant announced: "Mr. Hope."

"Pardon me, Miss Hedley," said that much-misunderstood young captain, "but I had expected to see Lady Norman."

"She is at home," Evelyn answered. "No, Miss Evelyn," interrupted the servant, "my lady went out only a few minutes ago, without saying where, or when she would return, or, in fact, leaving a word for anyone."

"Augusta," cried Stanley, before any further explanation could take place, "I am overjoyed to see you—the more so, that I did not expect it. I have heard of your defeating that rascal—"

He stopped. Here he was, in the wrong again. He relinquished the little hand that almost hardened in his, and turned to Evelyn for a reply.

"I had not heard, Mr. Hope," she said, "that my mother had gone out. But—" as Augusta swept away from the room, with a graceful bow, intended to have a touch of sarcasm in it—she added: "What, Stanley, is the meaning of all this? Why are you and Augusta at variance with each other? Tell me, Stanley. She is to me as a sister, and you, I thought, would be, through her, equally my brother."

He told her, with frankness, the whole story, sparing Constance, however, and her unconscious confession of love.

"She thinks me a fortune-hunter," he concluded, "and fancies that I am angling for her wealth, with that future coronet—which I may never wear."

"Then," replied Evelyn, with something of her old manner returning, "if that is all you are two—babies. How did it come about?"

Treating her, three years younger than himself though she was, as a sister to be confided in and seek counsel from, he described the whole circumstances, so far as they were known to him.

"Let me send for her," she said, after a little reflection, and rang the bell.

In reply to her question it was told: "Miss Fairleigh had left the Chase."

Half an hour later a message came to the door.

"Miss Fairleigh had returned in the carriage with Lady Norman, who lay in a death-like swoon, and could not be revived."

There was no explanation possible, apparently, of this sudden collapse.

Evelyn went to her. First, however, meeting Augusta by the way, she stood in the path of that high-toned young lady, saying:

"You darling goose. Someone is in my room, waiting for you."

"Not Stanley, because if it is—"

"If it is, you will confess yourselves two of the worst simpletons that ever breathed. But what is the matter with Lady Norman?"

"She will not tell me. I met the carriage driving up the avenue. The men called me and I found her as she is now."

"Where had she been?"

"They could not say. She got out a mile from the gates, and came back, they said, like one distracted."

It is necessary to be parenthetical now and then.

How came it that half an hour later, Mr. Stanley Hope, looking down on a dear face in the little Woodland, was saying:

"Why did you doubt me, darling?"

And she murmuring:

"Why did you leave me, wretch?"

And why were they swearing at each other—in the sweetest possible language—that not past, nor present, nor future, should ever again

separate their hearts by so much as the distance between the earth and the sun, as if they knew how much that was?

They must be left to themselves, weaving their own golden chain, which was to bind together their destinies for ever and a day, but the heiress of Fairleigh persisted still that life could have for her no halcyon rest until she had once more seen him who called her "daughter," and heard what she called "the mystery of the mystery" surrounding him.

Meanwhile, Evelyn had found Lady Norman in her chamber, half recovered from her swoon.

Clasped in each other's arms, they long remained silent. The silence, at length, was broken by Lady Norman herself.

"He is a fearful man," she said.

"Who? Drake? But he is gone, dearest mamma," interposed the young girl.

"But with the soul of a martyr," Lady Norman continued, unheeding her.

"Who, my beloved mother?" asked Evelyn, frightened.

"Take this. Hide it. Never let him see it again," went on the lady of the noble face, to whom she had given, after short teaching, all the generous and simple love of a child. "Is there blood upon it?" she added.

That was the dagger, surely, which we have seen, of steel, silvered in the moonlight, in the hand of Richard Thornton, as he went upon his pilgrimage of revenge, or, as he said in his heart, justice, up the staircase, and through the corridors of the Black Moat!

Evelyn, not without a creeping of the nerves, put it quietly away, and her mother slept in her arms.

Long and patiently she waited for the return of wakeful consciousness to those eyes, heavy-lidded with sorrow.

When they opened, it was Lady Norman thinking, not Lady Norman in a waking dream, who spoke.

"Evelyn," she said, "I terrified you—when was it?"

"This morning. But I was not terrified—only perplexed. At least, I fancy it was this morning—the time seems so confused. Where had you been, mamma?"

"Listen. Where have you put that thing? I had a warning. I went to the Black Moat, and watched, and waited—hours, Evelyn. I knew where he slept—that opium-eater."

"Mamma!"

"Yes, he, Drake, the man of the Temple. Heavens, what am I saying! What have I said, Evelyn?"

"Nothing, mamma; but you did not take that dagger with you?"

"No. I took it out of his hand."

"Whose hand? What was it? Oh, my mother! What does all this mean?" cried Evelyn, wrought up now to a paroxysm of excitement. "Where was it, and who was there?"

"The man of the Temple, I tell you," said Lady Norman, "was lying on his bed, in his den at the Black Moat, and I looked at him, as he slept. One came near, armed with that which I gave you. In another moment, Mathew Drake would have been dead."

"You saved him?"

"I saved him. Yes; Mathew Drake dies at no other bidding than that of Evelyn Hedley."

"But think, my darling," pleaded the young girl, as if reversing her position towards the beautiful woman, now so tragically solemn, "suppose he grovelled for mercy at my feet?"

"You would remember that you were Evelyn Hedley. Would you not?"

A flutter of the heart, a painful faintness, a compression and whiteness of the lips, a look upwards and around, and the young heiress of Norman Chase made answer, slowly, deliberately, and sternly:

"I should remember, my mother, that my name is Evelyn Hedley."

What are those troops of men upon the lawn? What means that crashing in of windows, and breaking in of doors?

Who is that hunted man, flying and furious,

who turns and doubles with the pursuit, half the country-side at his heels?

Foremost in the chase, his face livid with passion, is one whom we have seen before, but so distorted and discoloured by some dreadful frenzy of the mind as hardly to be recognised, who shouts:

"Murderer! seize him!" as the desperate wretch, evidently better knowing than his enemies the tracks and mazes of the Chase, struggles to reach a door, through which he hopes to pass, and thus bury himself in a labyrinth of rooms, staircases, and passages.

He turns here, there, in every direction.

"Ah! this way," he ejaculates.

No. He is faced there by the brother of his murdered wife.

That way! No; again! The mimic corpse in Henry Mainwaring's chamber confronts him.

Then, this!

But the crimson blood drowns his sight, as, proud and peerless, Evelyn gazes at his degradation from a window of Norman Chase.

Determined still, he dashes on.

The four servants remaining in the mansion run out to get an explanation of all this clamour.

"Sheriffs after me for debt," shouted Mathew Drake, with a remnant of the craft belonging to him. "Keep off these fellows, my good friends."

But they stuck to him like a pack of hounds to a hare, and, as he stumbled or staggered through the little postern door, they had nearly grasped his shoulders.

Here they were at fault. It gave him a moment of breathing time.

Whither should he fly? Upon all the earth had he made one solitary friend?

If human mercy had a haven, he knew it would be in Evelyn Hedley's heart.

Dare he go to her and seek it? No, the chapel.

"The police are there!" said Martha Page, pushing him back. "Hide somewhere else, you rat!"

In that room? No. They would certainly search it, even if his soul did not quail and leave him senseless at the door.

Heavens! they are close upon him. He burst into the library. There was a blazing fire.

"I will burn them, Evelyn, and all!" he shrieked, as plucking a huge red billet from the and-irons, he flung it amid a heap of papers and pictures that lay piled up in a corner.

The great bell of Norman Chase was now ringing, and the hue and cry denouncing "Murderer!" in every accent of men's voices, in every echo of the hills, in every clang of that awful tocsin, called after him "Murderer!"

Night had fallen, and torches were flickering, far and away, near and around, and the deadly circle closed upon this miserable outcast, to whom it seemed there was none to save.

"Go and sin no more!"

Suddenly a gleam of hope flashed upon the mind of the unutterable forlorn fugitive. He was in the corridor which led to Evelyn's chamber, into which he had stolen like a thief, and which he had desecrated by kissing her pillow.

There, if anywhere, was sanctuary. He heard her voice; she was crying out in terror.

"Even she," he thought, "will pity me, albeit that I am, and flying for my life."

He struck violently at the door, and he stood, or rather sank, in the presence of Evelyn Hedley.

"Save me, Miss Hedley!" he screamed, rather than cried. "Nobody will dare to come here. Oh, Evelyn Hedley, I, who have insulted, and wronged, and— but they are coming. Evelyn Hedley, on my knees, I implore your compassion. You will not give me up to them."

Evelyn, white in face as the marble Justice in the Athenian Temple, looked down, noble and lovely, as this man humiliated himself at her feet.

"What did you ask me, my mother?" she said, turning towards the lady who stood near

her, pale and cold as Hermione upon her pedestal.

"Whether your name is Evelyn Hedley?"

"It is."

"Have pity, Evelyn, Miss Hedley? Shelter me. Give me time to escape. For your father's sake, Evelyn Hedley. You can. I have locked the door."

"I will unlock it!" said Evelyn. "Whoever you are who want Mathew Drake, he is there!"

Iphigenia in Tauris was not less stone-hearted at the sacrificial altar than was this young Nemesis of her father's fame.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

And then went and, yet I was not with thee,
And then wert sick, and yet I was not near;
Methought that joy and health alone could be
Where I was not, and pain and sorrow here.

BRASS.

An atmosphere of brightness appeared to have been created within the walls of Norman Chase, now that its evil spirit, as it were, had been exorcised.

Still no change took place in the manner of life pursued by its inmates; for all felt that a terrible episode was to come which would more envelope the fated houses in a cloud the bursting of which might lay bare the heart of mysteries equally feared by all, and yet whose burden had grown at last to be more unendurable than the thought of what might follow the unsealing of those old secrets.

The question now became—what was really known to Mathew Drake; what, in his revenge, he would disclose, and what in the hope of conciliating those whom he had so bitterly injured, he would keep back?

Three months must elapse before he would be brought to trial.

There were to be three indictments: For the murder of Sir Norman Hedley; for the forging of the Mainwaring Will; and for the abduction of Evelyn Hedley, with violence.

The witnesses in the first were to be Lady Norman, her daughter, the false Sir Norman, if he could be found, Martha Page and Augusta Fairleigh.

When, in his right, the prisoner received this list, his frenzy rose to a terrible pitch; and if mere animal rage could have torn the locks and bolts off the door of his cell, no miracle would have been needed to procure his escape.

Shame and humiliation almost overwhelmed the culprit each time that his eye passed over the name of the young girl whom, of all beings in the world, he most hated, feared, and yearned to possess.

He saw now, when too late, how blind and brutal had been his conduct towards her—how ruinous to his own hopes, how calculated to make such a nature loathe and despise him.

Had he sought her confidence, given her half his own, appeared to be her father's shield against some unknown, though terrible danger, filial love might at least have made her grateful.

Instead of which he had goaded her by insults, taunts, and outrage, besides exhibiting himself to her in the character of a despicable criminal.

Had he sought deliberately to incur her dislike and contempt, he could not have pursued a course better calculated for the purpose.

Mr. Anthony Maxwell did not desert his friend in the hour of need; but presented himself in due time at the gates of York Castle, as Mathew Drake's attorney.

The days had not yet come when prisoners confined on a capital charge were constantly and personally watched by their gaolers.

Nor were magisterial investigations at that time either very elaborate or very fair towards the accused.

A few brief statements made before Sir Garnett Gomm, of the Cavalier Tower, sufficed, in that worthy's opinion, for the committal of Mathew Drake to York Castle on all of the three indictments.

The captive was sitting in his cell, in a state of the profoundest gloom, when Anthony Maxwell entered.

Any hand, held out in friendship, was welcome now.

The list of witnesses was lying on a table. The attorney, after a professional commonplace or two, took it up.

His face, in a moment, brightened, and that of the prisoner's brightened correspondingly.

"Well," he said, "what do you make of it?"

"Nothing but good," replied his visitor. "Let me see—Lady Norman—blot her out; she was in India at the time; Evelyn Hedley, she suspected someone else at first, we can cut her to pieces in cross-examination; Miss Fairleigh, she knows nothing of the murder, only of the supplementary business."

"You forget the cord."

"No admissions, my friend, even to me. We will have fifty yards of that cord ready before the trial. Of herself, she knows nothing of the affair—any more than you do, eh, Mathew?"

Mathew anathematised him, but he went on, calmly.

"Martha Page, only Evelyn's shadow. The false Sir Norman Hedley? Where is he, and what could he tell?"

"I have not the least idea of where he is, or of what he would say. I fancy he would neither appear nor speak."

"Well, my friend," said the attorney, leaning back in his chair, "I honestly think they have no case, or only one of suspicion, and that not very strong. He, that impostor, to judge from what I have heard you hint, would have had a stronger interest than yourself in the death of this man. Can you prove it?"

"I fancy so. But mind, I will have no counsel. I will defend myself, if necessary."

"If necessary! Why, Mathew, you surely do not hope that they will let the prosecution drop. They could not if they would. It is a Crown Indictment. Besides, I firmly believe that no human consideration would prevent Evelyn from arraigning you at the felon's bar, though she stood alone, with the twelve judges themselves confronting her in their robes."

The face of Mathew Drake blanched as he heard this.

In his heart of hearts he knew it to be true, and the conviction galled him to the quick. After a pause, during which he gnawed ferociously at his finger nails, he said:

"There is no possibility of escape?"

"I had thought of that, because there are those other charges which would certainly be gone on with if the murder indictment broke down. You ask—is it possible? Of course it is. Money, my friend. Have you enough? You know how I have disgorged. There must be plenty to make it worth of the fellows here to be dismissed, or even punished for their neglect. But for the sake of appearances, we must have the usual rope-ladder, files, and all that."

Mathew Drake never hesitated an instant. The horror of his threatened doom appalled him.

He would have gone out in beggary to be free.

Giving his legal adviser a key, therefore, with instructions, he awaited his return on the following day.

It came, and with it Anthony Maxwell.

That night a curious scene was enacted within the walls of York Castle, that great royal and feudal fortress long since converted into a gaol for felons.

In a low-roofed room arched with stone, and having walls of enormous thickness, as was shown by the deeply-embossed, doubly-barred window, a dungeon in which the captive might truly be said to have abandoned hope, with an iron-plated door, and no vestige of a key-hole on its interior face; a ponderous oaken truckle-bed, table, and two chairs fixed to the floor; a stone pitcher chained to the wall, and angry-looking rings and chains for the refractory, were Mathew Drake and Anthony Maxwell, working like blacksmiths, though noiselessly.

According to the lawyer's advice, the ordinary paraphernalia of gaol breaking had been provided—a rope ladder, files, two steel-tipped crowbars, a jar of oil, a box of "silent matches," a dark lantern, and a huge flask of spirits. The men sweated at their noiseless labours.

"It's large enough," said Maxwell. "Now to settle the ladder. So: take a pull at this, my friend, to steady your nerves. Up you go. Get out backwards. Hist! Hold on!"

The door was opened and the turnkey entered.

"Now's your time, gentlemen," he said, not in the least astonished at what he saw. "Rogers is gone off to the north wall and no one is below. Health and long life to you, Mr. Drake. Mr. Maxwell, you had better follow me. This way."

"This way" had been literally paved with gold.

Five thousand guineas in ringing coin of the realm had been practically the price of Mr. Mathew Drake's rope ladder with its nest accessories.

Left alone, a strange fear came over him. There could be little peril in the descent, it was true, unless his nerves gave way.

The distance had been measured, and the rungs of rope, though slight, were firm. But the darkness below was as that of pitch. A few feeble oil-lamps glimmered at long distances apart on the black ramparts, and a stormy moon looked threateningly over a heavy bank of clouds that hung like monstrous shadows in a broken sky.

A strange thrill passed through the murderer's heart as, a fugitive felon, he crawled his way to the ground.

Whither should he go?

Was there, among all the millions that lived upon the earth, a single one whose hand would take his in friendship—a single one who would open a door to him; a man or a woman who would welcome him, accused as he was by crime, except that reptile accomplice of his villainies, the forger of Lyon's Inn?

Ah! there had been one; in spite of falsehood and cruelty, there had been one.

He nearly lost his hold as the name whispered itself in his ear.

"Esther Drake."

He reached the pavement of the gloomy courtyard.

All was still.

Dark and high rose the walls around him. But his path had been prepared.

A little postern door stood open, and with a sense of relief not to be described, Mathew Drake stood outside the prison gates!

"Thank Heaven!" he ejaculated, pausing to draw a long breath, "I am out of that."

In an instant a hand, hard as a garotte, was at his throat, and a cold pressure of steel upon his brow.

In another instant the handcuffs were on his wrists, and the miserable man found himself once more a prisoner.

Several men in the familiar costume of the famous magistrate's court at Bow Street stood around him, and among them, by the light of the moon, he recognised, stern as death, the countenance of Richard Thornton.

"You villain!" he said, advancing. "Did you hope to escape? Did you think I should sleep while the blood of your victims cried out in vain for vengeance? Did you imagine that I was not on the track of your ally when he fetched your bribe from the Black Moat? Keep quiet, Mathew Drake. March back to your cell. Don't make this attempt again. Take him in, men."

Language could not depict the frenzy of despair into which the defeated conspirator was thrown by this unexpected misfortune.

Almost equally awful, in a different way, was the vindictive exultation with which Richard Thornton gloated over the mental agony of his victim.

He saw him given up to the governor; he saw him led to an underground cell; he saw him heavily-ironed, with two warders set over him, to be relieved, night and day.

Then Mathew Drake gave himself up as



[RUN TO EARTH.]

entirely lost. His sole consolation lay in the visits of the attorney, who was, however, permitted no more private interviews.

To the patient, all things come, and the day of trial came at last. The Court formed a part of the Castle.

It was a vast apartment, of horse-shoe shape, and three judges, in scarlet and ermine, highly raised above the rest, occupied the bench.

The dreaded, double-bladed sword was suspended on the wall above their heads, beneath the Royal Arms.

They looked sufficiently stern as Mathew Drake, relieved from his irons, wearing black kid gloves, and elaborately dressed, took his place in the dock, bowed slightly, and waited for the arraignment.

The Clerk of the Arraignment read it, couched in a language, as it was then, and is now, unintelligible to three-fourths of the listeners.

These composed a suffocating crowd. The whole of the county magistracy were present. The body of the Court was crammed with spectators; for was not the mystery of the Norman Chase murder about to be solved?

In all that multitude the prisoner could not recognise one friendly or pitying face.

That of Anthony Maxwell wore its accustomed sneer, while those of his counsel were cold and unsympathetic.

But his principal attention was devoted to a dark figure standing in the entrance of the room set apart for witnesses. It was that of Evelyn Hedley.

Called into the witness-box, she answered, very calmly, the questions put to her. They need not be repeated in detail, since they would, for the most part, be only a reiteration of the general narrative.

But her story, from first to last, was heard with breathless amazement, varied at times by those unformed murmurs, and glances from eye to eye, which are usually described by the word "sensation."

Some, however, of her answers, on examination and cross-examination, were singularly

potent in their effect upon the audience, and upon the prisoner himself.

"Who was the first person you met, when leaving your room, after the alarm?" asked the prosecuting counsel.

"My father—that is, him whom I had been taught to call so."

Mathew Drake bent forward in the dock, as if life and death hung upon her next reply.

"Was he going towards Mr. Mainwaring's room—we will not substitute any other name for the present—or coming from it?"

She pressed one hand upon her forehead, and steadied herself with the other, while she answered, in a low tone:

"Coming from it."

A scarcely perceptible smile stole across the lips of the accused.

"Who was the first person to enter the room of the murdered man?"

"Mathew Drake."

This she spoke impetuously, as if it would remove the evil impression produced by her last reply.

But the contrary was the case. The prisoner smiled again, this time more distinctly, and his counsel put on a triumphant look.

Would any man, at the very moment when his hands were foul with crime, and the shriek of the victim ringing in his ears, thus unqualifyingly confront the dead?

The cross-examination went on with greater austerity, when it suddenly received a check.

"You began by suspecting someone else—who was it?"

"Her suspicions are nothing to the purpose," interrupted the presiding judge.

"Where did you find the pieces of cord you speak of?"

"One in the room in which the Indian entertainment was given; the other at the bottom of the grave-like hollow in the old chapel."

"Is it a cord of a very uncommon kind?"

"I never saw any resembling it."

"My lord," said the counsel, taking something which was passed to him by Mr. Anthony

Maxwell, and handing it up to the Bench, "we show what this bit of evidence is worth. Here is a perfect coil of rope—yards upon yards of it—identical in tint, texture, and size with that upon which the witness evidently relies as fatal and conclusive testimony."

It was true. The link had been broken, and Mr. Mathew Drake began to experience a more comfortable sensation in the neighbourhood of his left ear.

Evelyn's account of the deathly masquerade by which she had hoped to extort a practical confession from the murderer created a feeling of astonishment; but went no way to prove the prisoner's guilt.

Anyone, it was felt, might be startled and terrified by an apparition bearing so ghostly a resemblance to a dead man—a man that had been assassinated in that very chamber—on that very pillow.

As to the forgery, it was the subject of a different indictment.

So far, the probabilities of a conviction were few.

Still, the prosecuting counsel seemed nothing daunted.

Witness after witness was examined, with the result predicted by Anthony Maxwell.

Augusta Fairleigh could really testify to nothing.

Nor Gilbert Green, or his wife or daughter.

Richard Thornton broke down immediately after taking the oath.

He had come to give evidence about one murder, and had nothing to say except about another, concerning which nothing was set forth in the arraignment.

Not a step in advance was made until Lady Norman Hedley stood in the box, face to face with the man whom, in her inmost soul, she believed to be the assassin of her husband. One look was all she gave him.

He returned it unflinchingly.

(To be Continued.)



[IN THE EARLY SUNSHINE.]

"MY LOVE IS LIKE A RED, RED ROSE."

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Sinned Against: Not Sinning," &c.

CHAPTER XIII.

Give me a man, or a woman either, with a strong will, that is genius. SAYING OF NAPOLEON I.

BEFORE he slept that night Clement Woodleigh wrote an account of his interview with the housekeeper to Sir Mervyn.

The latter reaches Petherick Place the next day, and over it Sir Mervyn greatly marvels. Moreover, by the same post he receives a letter from his aunt Mrs. Butler.

His aunt is his mother's sister; she is now a middle-aged widow, and had in her youth been married to the Hon. George Butler, who died, leaving her a widow with one daughter and a very slender jointure.

The Hon. George had married the daughter of the Cornish miner, in order to become the possessor, less of Miss Trevennick's very dubious charms than of her money-bags.

Like all Cornish people, the young woman was pushing, and determined, if possible, to be a somebody in the world.

So she bought the Hon. George; whom she nagged to death; buried him decently, and then set up as an exclusive, gentle and sensitive person with an overwhelming affection for her darling and only child, Amelia Butler.

The Hon. Mrs. George (as she called herself) had kept a close hand over her money; so that when the Hon. George died she was in possession of a private purse, known not even to her daughter.

The latter had been baptised after an old

aunt from whom they had had expectations. But when the old lady died, leaving her nephew five guineas to buy a hair-shirt in which to do penance for his vulgar marriage, Miss Amelia changed her name to "Geraldine," as being more aristocratic and euphonious; therefore, as the world calls her so, she appears in this true and moving history as "Miss Geraldine Butler."

She and her mother have lodgings in Park Lane, and on the morning of the day upon which Clement Woodleigh visits at Great Gaunt Street, she is seated looking over a local paper of about a week old.

Miss Butler is nine-and-twenty, bustless, thick-waisted, and saw-toothed, with a profusion of light, sandy hair, small, greenish eyes, and a sensual mouth.

Although carefully dressed and cultured to the very utmost, yet her plebeian origin, on one side, shows itself not in any one particular point, but in her general bearing.

"Goodness gracious!" she suddenly ejaculates, looking up from the paper.

"What is the matter, Geraldine?" asks the mother, looking up from the substantial repast of kippered herring, which she much and often enjoys in private. "What's the matter wit'ee?"

The Hon. Mrs. George retains many of the vulgar provincialisms of her Cornish youth.

"Listen to this," and Geraldine reads a most exciting (and untrue) account of Sir Mervyn's accident.

"Poor, dear Mervyn," she exclaims, "with no one to take proper care of him down there. Poor, poor fellow."

Sir Mervyn Petherick had once in his life seen his aunt and cousin, and he made a vow that if he could decently keep out of their way that he would do so.

He was disgusted with their vulgarity and fulsome.

His money and the position it had given him had brought him in contact with well-bred

women, and therefore he felt ashamed of their manners and appearances.

"He never was very civil to us," replies Mrs. Butler, "so I don't see why we should trouble our heads about him."

The younger woman continues her breakfast in silence.

She has a clever, scheming mind. She is a woman who turns every circumstance to account; everything she transmutes either to money or makes it the means of achieving some social advantages.

This accident to her cousin Sir Mervyn Petherick is much too important an affair to be overlooked.

"Mother," she says, with a scowl upon her customarily amiable-looking and candid countenance, "you know very well that we can't afford to lose the countenance of a relative with a title. My father's relations will not have anything to say to us, and Mervyn is the only one of yours that it would do for us to tolerate in our present position."

"Well, I suppose 'ee'll do what 'ee likes," says Mrs. Butler, resignedly. "What are 'ee going t' do about Mervyn?"

"We must go down there," replies Miss Butler, decidedly and shortly.

"But why, dearie, why?"

"To nurse him. He really has no near relatives but us, and it will be a good excuse for us to get to Petherick Place."

Mrs. Butler looks aghast at the audacity of the idea, but her strong-minded daughter carries her point.

Miss Butler composes a sympathetic and affectionate letter, which her mother copies, saying that they will be down to Petherick Place the next afternoon.

Sir Mervyn is in a dilemma. He has a rooted abhorrence to his vulgar aunt, and her clever but underbred daughter. As he is sitting looking ruefully at the letter his doctor is announced.

"Well!" exclaims the good little man, "what is the matter with you this afternoon,

my friend? Duns or love-letters, which, my boy, eh?" and, as usual, Doctor Fleming laughs at what he considers his own wit.

"Neither, doctor, neither," says his patient, with a sigh.

"Then what is it?" inquires the doctor, who is as curious as any old maid; "tell me, my boy, I may not be able to

Minister to a mind diseased,
Or pluck from memory a rooted sorrow.

but if you are in any trouble, I may be able to give you some common-sense advice. Come, now, tell me all about it."

Sir Mervyn hands Clement Woodleigh's letter to the worthy little doctor. The latter carefully peruses it, and then says:

"My dear Sir Mervyn. The plot is thickening certainly, but there is nothing here to make you look so very miserable. Quite the contrary, I should say. Just wait until Mr. Woodleigh has seen the Earl of Brakenstone's solicitors, and I feel sure something more definite must be ascertained. It is a strange affair altogether, but since you have become so far involved, you know you must go through with it. You are in honour bound now to let the Lady Isola Marbourne out of your ken until you deliver her up, either to her father, or to someone empowered to act for him. Of course you see that clearly?"

"I am quite aware of that."

"Well, then, why do you look so glum, my good friend?" continued the doctor, "you are getting along splendidly in health, so what makes you look so very down-spirited to-day?"

"Read that letter, doctor," and Sir Mervyn hands him the letter composed by Miss Butler, and copied by her mother.

"Well?" asks the doctor, as he examines the epistle, "what is there in this letter to make you look so miserable?"

"I don't like them," he replies, shortly, "my aunt, Mrs. Butler, is, I am sorry to say, an unbearable, vulgar woman, her daughter is scheming and underbred, and—and—" he concludes ignominiously, "I don't care for them or for their society in the very least, and only it is too late to do so, I would certainly telegraph and say that I am much obliged, but that I do not require their services."

The little doctor thinks for a minute, and then says:

"The Lady Isola Marbourne is yet staying here?"

"Yes," and Sir Mervyn Petherick's pallid cheek flushes as he thinks of the lovely, radiant vision in emerald green, which had paid him a brief visit as he lay on his sofa in the forenoon.

"Then I think it rather a fortunate thing that these ladies are coming," says the doctor, wisely; "you must know that it has been a very wrong thing for the young lady to have remained here."

The doctor speaks rather gravely, and looks seriously at the young baronet as he speaks.

"But she has been completely under the care of the housekeeper," says Sir Mervyn.

"That is of no consequence," pursues the doctor; "you have no lady nominally even at the head of your household, therefore it has not been right for the Lady Isola Marbourne to have stayed here, she should have gone to the Rectory as I had suggested."

"She absolutely refused to leave the house," Sir Mervyn urges by way of extenuation.

"I don't care what she said," persists the obstinate little doctor; "if I had had a hand in the matter, she'd have been sent off to the Rectory. But the fact is," he continues cynically, "both you and that good-looking painter fellow could not resist anything that so lovely a girl asked of you."

Sir Mervyn smiles.

"Perhaps you are right, doctor."

"Then all the more reason that you should be very glad to welcome some of your own womankind about you. I call it a special interposition of providence that your aunt has offered to come to you at this awkward juncture,

and take my advice and make matters agreeable for her, particularly if you have any designs respecting your present lovely guest. And now good-bye, my boy, I'll see you, and I trust the ladies, not the lady alone, to-morrow."

And so saying Doctor Fleming takes his leave.

The circumstance of his aunt and cousin's visit presents itself now in a much more favourable light to Sir Mervyn Petherick. He ponders over the good advice given to him by the good little doctor, and the result is that Mrs. Butler and her daughter are rejoiced by the state carriage from Petherick Place being sent to meet them, whilst the decorous respectful footman says:

"Sir Mervyn Petherick's here, and he regrets being unable to meet Mrs. and Miss Butler himself, but he hopes they will take the will for the deed, and come at once to Petherick Place."

The hearts of both women beat high, and Geraldine Butler says to herself:

"I shall be more than Matilda Trevennick's clever daughter; I shall be like Sir Mervyn Petherick's daughter-in-law, and the present Sir Mervyn's wife!"

And her hard face and cruel green-gray eyes look as though she means all she says.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Will you walk into my parlour?"
Said the spider to the fly.

Sir Mervyn Petherick has told his aunt and his cousin as much of the Lady Isola's history as he deems it necessary to narrate them with; nevertheless, Miss Geraldine Butler is not satisfied, and feels convinced that Sir Mervyn is suppressing some portion of this strange story.

The more she thinks over it, the more she is convinced of the accuracy of her conclusions. Sir Mervyn has merely said that certain circumstances necessitated the removal of the Lady Isola Marbourne from the Towers, and that the same circumstances rendered it necessary that she should remain at Petherick Place for the present.

Meanwhile, the Lady Isola has petitioned not to be asked to meet Mrs. Butler and her daughter upon the evening of their arrival. She instinctively shrinks from meeting them, and Sir Mervyn does not press the matter.

"Mother," says Geraldine Butler, invading her mother's dressing-room, upon the first night of their arrival at Petherick Place, "you must manage to get to see this mysterious Lady Isola Marbourne to-morrow."

"Why to-morrow, Geraldine?" inquires her mother, who loathes trouble of any kind. "Isn't it time enough. If she is hoity-toity, and doesn't want to know us, why should we want to force us on her?"

"Rubbish!" ejaculates her dutiful daughter. "We must get to see this Lady Isola whether she likes or not, and what is more, we must try and make ourselves indispensable to her."

"We never could do that," responds Mrs. Butler, doubtfully.

"Leave that to me," retorts Geraldine, "it is easier than you think to make one's self indispensable to any person. Plenty of flattery, judiciously laid on, sooner or later brings the flattered one within the power of the flatterer. I have never known it to fail, and why should this woman be an exception to the general rule?"

The woman's eyes flashed balefully as she spoke; and the square chin, and the determined, though sensual mouth took its customary hard expression.

"I don't see what good it can do us," querulously replies Mrs. Butler.

She is tired after her journey, and wishes her clever daughter would go and leave her in peace.

"Then you are blind to your own and my interests!" exclaims Geraldine, "Don't you

see what a fine thing it would be for me to have an earl's daughter for a bosom friend, as I mean this Lady Isola shall be."

Thus she works upon her mother, until the poor woman, less convinced by her daughter's argument than by her desire to get rid of her, promises to besiege the Lady Isola the next morning.

The girl yet wears the emerald velvet dress; and in the cool of the early morning is wont to be up and about amongst the lawns and shrubberies of Petherick Place.

She is sensitive of meeting these strangers, and rises earlier than usual so as to enjoy undisturbed the exquisite balmy freshness of the morning, and the floral treasures of Petherick Place, with which the gardens and parterres are lavishly furnished.

There is a small rose-garden at one side of the house, and this is the Lady Isola's especial and favourite retreat.

She loves to wander there whilst the dew is yet upon the clusters of the queen of flowers, and to revel in their beauty and sweet perfume. It forms a new sensation for both senses.

Some of the bedrooms look out upon this rose-garden; and amongst them is that occupied by Geraldine Butler.

Even she is attracted by the balmy dewy freshness of the early July morning, upon this first day after her arrival.

The sun peeps in through the chinks of the blinds and curtains, as though to say:

"Awake! awake! and behold the goddess Aurora, standing amongst the roses."

Something impels Geraldine Butler to go to the window and to draw aside the blind.

The morning sun is flinging its beams over the land, bathing the landscape in one delicious flood of glorious light, which is reflected from the millions of dewdrops glittering like diamonds upon leaves, flowers, and grasses.

The sight is a goodly one, and one for which to thank a beneficent Providence.

But nothing of this strikes Geraldine Butler, as she gazes down into the rose garden.

For she sees there a vision such as she had never, in her most romantic dreams, ever conjured up.

Beneath a sort of arbour formed of clambering roses—crimson, white, pink, and yellow—stands a girl attired in a gown of emerald green.

Her radiant, flashing face, upturned as though to gather in the sweetness of the roses; her long, black waving hair floating over her shoulders, and the sunlight making a glory around her.

She looks like a young Diana, fresh from the chase, or like Aurora, rejoicing in the beauty of the morning of which she is the personification.

Unconscious that she is watched, the Lady Isola moves about amongst the roses and the short, thick dew-laden grass.

And as she comes nearer, Geraldine Butler sees the rare and exquisite beauty of the girl's face.

"It must be the Lady Isola," she says to herself. "What an extraordinary manner in which to be dressed at this hour of the morning. However, it's a good thing to catch her alone. I'll go down and make her acquaintance."

So Geraldine Butler makes a hasty toilette, and, robed in virgin white, adorned with a profusion of pale blue ribbons, she descends to the rose-garden; and advancing to the timid Lady Isola, holds out her hand with a frank, sweet smile, and says in her most suave tones:

"The Lady Isola Marbourne, is it not?"

The Lady Isola looks at her with some perturbation.

This, then, is the cousin, or aunt, she is not sure which of whom Sir Mervyn Petherick and Mrs. Mason had both spoken.

Placing her hand in Geraldine Butler's proffered one, she asks, innocently:

"Are you Sir Mervyn Petherick's aunt? For if you are, I have heard him speak of you."

Geraldine Butler winces. She is more than ordinarily touchy on the subject of her age; and she feels that she must look much older

than she is when contrasted with this radiant and blooming girl.

"What a curious question!" she exclaims, yet concealing her vexation. "Why I am not nearly as old as Sir Mervyn!" (She is nearly two years his senior.) "He is my cousin; it is my mother who is Sir Mervyn Petherick's aunt. But you have not answered my question. Am I addressing the Lady Isola Marbourne?"

"I am the Lady Isola Marbourne," she replies, simply adding ingenuously, "who are you?"

"I am Geraldine Butler," and as I have told you, Sir Mervyn's cousin. My mother and I came here on a visit to nurse dear Mervyn, and we are so pleased to make your acquaintance."

Geraldine Butler presses the girl's hand as she speaks.

"You are very kind," returns the Lady Isola, "but everyone here is very kind to me," and her lovely face flushes.

In her heart of hearts, Geraldine Butler cannot but admit the rare and wondrous beauty of the Lady Isola's face.

And Geraldine Butler does not like to see it, for what chance can she, with her lack of personal charms, have of captivating Sir Mervyn when contrasted with this glorious creature.

"Dear Mervyn is truly kind-hearted!" exclaimed Geraldine, effusively. "I am so pleased, and, indeed, so was my mother when we heard you were here, for I wanted some young companion," she continued, pathetically, "and then the romantic circumstances of your visit here have quite interested me! Do tell me all about yourself!"

As she concludes, Geraldine Butler entwines her arm in that of the Lady Isola and walks through the rose-garden with her.

The Lady Isola is not quite sure of what Geraldine Butler means when she alludes to "romantic circumstances."

However, she thinks her new companion is very kind, and she is quite willing to make a bosom friend of her.

She has no idea that she is acting unwisely in speaking thus openly to a stranger, therefore, the Lady Isola tells her whole history to the wary woman who listens.

"How delightfully romantic!" exclaims Geraldine Butler, "how deliciously unconventional. Does it not seem as if Fate had thrown you in our way?"

"I am sure I do not know," replies the Lady Isola, somewhat confusedly, for she does not quite understand the very demonstrative manner of her companion.

"I am sure of it then," continues Miss Butler. "I know it. I feel it. When I looked out of my window and saw you looking so beautiful amongst the roses I knew at once who you were, and felt I should love you like a sister!"

"Did you really?"

"The Lady Isola believes all this, and is quite ready to take Geraldine Butler at her own valuation."

"Of course I did," she says, "I hope you are prepared to love me as a sister in return?"

"I shall try," replies the Lady Isola rather shyly. "You are very good to say this to me, and—and you also said I was beautiful," she continues, innocently. "Am I really so?"

"Yes, of course you are," replies Miss Butler, with something like contempt in her voice, and thinking that if this girl be open to flattery that she may prove an easy victim.

But Geraldine Butler does not understand the Lady Isola's nature.

In asking if she were really beautiful the girl did not seek for compliments, she asked the question in the same sense as she would have asked if the leaves were green.

"I am glad I am beautiful," she says simply, "for I like beautiful things, and if I am so it may make other people as well as you love me."

"I am sure my cousin, Sir Mervyn, must love you!" says Geraldine Butler, throwing out the suggestion, and trusting to the girl's innocence not to perceive her motive.

"I don't know. I am sure I like him very much for all his kindness. But I almost think I like Mr. Woodleigh better, for, you know, he has gone to look for my father for me, and to bring him here."

The girl does not blush as she speaks, nor is there the least tremor or bashfulness in her manner.

But this does not reassure the wily Geraldine, who mutters to herself as they enter the hall.

"What blessed innocence. I must see if I cannot work upon it, and turn it to some account!"

CHAPTER XV.

In her face excuse
Came prologue, and apology too prompt.
MILTON.

BEFORE he sets off to keep his appointment with Messrs. Lennox and Steward, in Denton Court, Clement Woodleigh receives a letter from Sir Mervyn Petherick.

He tells him of his aunt and cousin's intention of coming to visit him, vigorously anathematizes his relatives, but says he is willing to put up even with them "for the sake of the Lady Isola."

Somehow or other the painter seems to resent his friend saying so.

He looks at the sketch of the lovely girl which he had made the night previous.

"Bah!" he exclaims, rising to his goodly height, and walking up and down the studio; "bah! What right have I to be jealous! Suppose the girl ever did care for me—I have nothing to offer her but love, and a proud man—as the Earl of Brackholme may be—would consider that of little account."

Involuntarily he stops opposite to the sketch, which seems to smile timidly back at him.

Although roughly done, it is a splendid likeness, and Clement Woodleigh almost feels proud of his work.

"What is the use of keeping it?" he says to himself, as he stands opposite to it with folded arms. "It will only add fuel to the passionate flame I feel that girl has kindled in my heart. I did not recognise my feelings until I left her; but I know them now, and I know that when she is restored to her proper position in society that I might as well dream of the Queen upon her throne being anything to me. As a beautiful vision I must ever think of her, but as nothing more."

A cloud passes over his brow, and his dark eyes take a deep, tender light as he gazes at the picture.

"Shall I destroy it?" he asks himself. "What is the use of keeping it? Anyhow, as I shall have to see her again there can be no harm in keeping it until then."

Clement Woodleigh goes to keep his appointment with the lawyers in Denton Court, and is ushered into the presence of a kindly-looking, white-haired old gentleman, whom he is told is Mr. Lennox.

"You wished to see me about some business relative to the Earl of Brackholme, my client, Mr. Woodleigh?" says the old gentleman, inquiringly.

"Yes," responds the painter. "I am here by proxy for my friend, Sir Mervyn Petherick, of Petherick Place."

The lawyer bows. "Indeed! If my memory serves me, I think Sir Mervyn Petherick's property adjoins that of the Earl of Brackholme—or at least a portion of my client's property which is situated in Dampshire."

"You are quite correct, sir."

The painter feels some little difficulty in coming to the point, and in telling this very dignified old gentleman the very curious and romantic circumstances under which he found the Lady Isola.

"No dispute about property or anything of the sort. I mean about boundaries or anything of that kind?" asked the old gentleman, smiling.

"Oh, no, nothing of that at all. Sir Mervyn has met with an accident," he continues, "which hinders his being able to be here himself, and he has deputed me to inform you, as the Earl of Brackholme's solicitor, that the Lady Isola Marbourne is at present staying at Petherick Place."

"What! what! what!" exclaims Mr. Lennox, looking rather perturbedly at the painter, as he grasped the arms of his chair and leans forward. "The Lady Isola Marbourne is under orders not to leave the Towers except by the express permission of his lordship! It is very remiss of Miss Nellie Ross to allow her charge to do so, although I presume Miss Ross has accompanied the Lady Isola?"

Again Clement Woodleigh listens to all these conflicting statements, and then requested Mr. Lennox to have a trustworthy witness by whilst he told his story.

"Whatever you have to say concerning the Lady Isola Marbourne may be said to me," replies the old gentleman, rather testily. "It was an unwise proceeding—very unwise, indeed for Miss Ross to allow the Lady Isola to visit anywhere without first asking permission."

But Clement Woodleigh was firm. Without giving any direct reply to Mr. Lennox, he said, quietly:

"I not only require a witness to what I am about to tell you, but you also had better have someone here to write down all I say."

He carried his point. Mr. Lennox rang the bell and summoned his junior partner, Mr. Steward, a handsome, well-preserved, acute-looking man, of about forty-five, who, in his turn summoned the shorthand clerk.

Clement Woodleigh gives a full, true, particular and circumstantial account of all that we know has happened with regard to his finding the Lady Isola, and his releasing her from the bondage in which she was kept.

As he proceeds with his story the two lawyers look more and more bewildered and mystified; at length he concludes, and Mr. Lennox says, gravely:

"Mr. Woodleigh, this is about the most extraordinary story I ever heard in the whole course of my experience."

"It is scarcely conceivable!" exclaims Mr. Steward.

"Mr. Woodleigh," continues Mr. Lennox, "I do not wish to cast any doubt upon your veracity, but you will excuse my saying I think there must be a mistake somewhere." In fact Mr. Lennox is strongly of opinion that the painter has been drawing largely upon his imagination. "Regularly once a week we receive a letter from Miss Ross, and another from the Lady Isola Marbourne, and in corroboration of what I say I shall show you those which we have received this morning."

"I cannot understand it!" exclaimed the thoroughly puzzled painter. "You had better come down and investigate the matter for yourself. In the name of my friend, Sir Mervyn Petherick, I invite you to Petherick Place."

All preliminaries are soon arranged, and Clement Woodleigh telegraphs to Sir Mervyn, telling him that Mr. Lennox accompanies him back to Petherick Place.

During the journey, the painter expatiates upon the beauty of the Lady Isola, speaking so enthusiastically about her, that Mr. Lennox is more than ever decided in his opinion that Clement Woodleigh is a young man of a more than ordinarily romantic and enthusiastic temperament.

The telegram arrives at Petherick Place just as they are all sitting in the cool drawing-room. Mrs. Butler is looking over the newspaper. Her daughter is executing in every sense of the word, a brilliant new waltz at the grand piano. The Lady Isola is seated at a window, gazing listlessly over the parks and lawns, and Sir Mervyn lies upon a sofa pretending to read, but in reality watching furtively his lovely guest.

Many thoughts rush through his mind. He knew it had been the dearest wish of his father's heart, as it was now of his own, to become allied with nobility, and Sir Mervyn is already beginning to build castles in the air, of

which the lovely Lady Isola is the chatelaine presumptive.

He is thoroughly annoyed at Geraldine Butler having become possessed of the entire facts of the Lady Isola's history.

The young woman is insupportably tiresome to him, and the fulsome show of affection which she lavishes upon his lovely guest is more than distasteful to him.

"Are you fond of music?" asks Geraldine Butler of the Lady Isola, at whose feet she seats herself in an ingenuous and confiding manner. "I feel sure you are."

"Yes, I think I do," is the reply, as the great eyes look out dreamily over the expanse of woodland. "I like hearing the birds sing early in the morning."

"Ah," says Geraldine, admiringly, "you are a true child of nature, you like nature's music. So do I, Mervyn, dear," she continues, affectionately addressing her cousin; "dear Isola and I have so many tastes in common. She loves wandering about in the early morning, when the dew is on the grass—when it sparkles like diamonds!" she exclaims, enthusiastically. "Only think; we met among the roses this morning. It was delicious; we were saying we wished you were with us, were we not, Isola?" she concludes, trusting to the girl's innocence to give an answer in the affirmative.

But Geraldine Butler reckons without her host for once in her life, for the Lady Isola replies with a little half puzzled air:

"I do not recollect. I said I was grateful to Sir Mervyn Petherick for all his kindness, but that I think I like Mr. Woodleigh better."

An angry flush passes over Sir Mervyn's very colourless countenance, but he says nothing. Geraldine Butler's sharp eyes see the flush, and she says sharply:

"I am quite curious to see this Mr. Woodleigh."

Suddenly the Lady Isola starts up, her bosom heaves, and her bright eyes look yet brighter, as she exclaims:

"Here he is! Here is Mr. Woodleigh!"

(To be Continued.)

LONDON AND SUBURBAN CHURCHES.

THE following particulars respecting the churches of London and its suburbs (within a radius of twelve miles) are compiled from the thirteenth annual edition of Mackeson's "Guide to the Churches of London and its Suburbs," published under the sanction of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of London, Winchester, Rochester, and St. Albans. The "Guide" contains information as to 864 churches, but for statistical purposes the number is reduced to 854.

There is a weekly celebration of the Holy Communion in 390, nearly one-half; daily Holy Communion in 42, one church in every twenty; early Communion in 458, more than one-half; choral celebration in 120, nearly one-seventh; evening Holy Communion in 246, more than one-fourth. There is no service on saints' days in 415 churches, nearly one half; daily service in 243, more than one-fourth; while in 138 cases, nearly one-sixth, there is no week-day service. The service is fully choral in 261 churches, nearly one-third, and partly choral in 240, or two-sevenths, thus giving 501 churches out of 854 where the psalms are chanted. There is a surpliced choir in 355, more than two-fifths; the choir is paid, or partly paid, in 220, more than one-fourth, and voluntary in 386, more than two-fifths. Gregorian tunes are used wholly or partly in 115, nearly one-seventh.

The seats are free and open in 252, more than one-fourth; and there is a weekly offertory in 405, more than one-half. The surplice is worn in preaching in 463, more than one-half. The eucharistic vestments are adopted in 35, or one church in every 24; incense is used in 14, and altar lights are used in 58, one-ninth; while in 41 other churches there are candles on the altar, but they are not lighted.

The eastward position is adopted by the celebrant at the Holy Communion in 179 churches, nearly one-fifth; 123, nearly one-seventh, are open for daily private prayer; floral decorations are introduced at 238, more than one-fourth; the Feast of Dedication is observed at 149, nearly one-sixth; the shortened form of daily service sanctioned by the Act of Uniformity Amendment Act is used at 88, nearly one-tenth; the Sunday services are separated at 49; the old lectionary is still used exclusively at 12 churches, and the old and new optionally at 6.

WATER FROM THE LOWER GREENSAND.

A BORING for water, conducted on behalf of the Admiralty authorities by Messrs. Docwra and Son, at her Majesty's Dockyard at Chatham, has just been carried to a successful issue in circumstances of considerable scientific interest. The object was to reach the lower greensand, as advised by Professor Ramsey, the Director-General of the Geological Survey, who, when consulted on the subject by the Admiralty a year ago, strongly recommended that the boring, which was then in the chalk, and yielded only brackish water, should be carried down through the gault, with the expectation that the lower greensand would thus be reached, and a plentiful supply of good water obtained.

The boring having been continued accordingly the lower greensand has been reached at a depth of 903 feet from the surface, and the water has risen so as to overflow the top of the well. Some years back Messrs. Docwra and Son tapped the lower greensand at Caterham, but as the boring was very small it was continually choked by the sand. The subject is interesting geologically, and will also be viewed in relation to the water supply of the metropolis.

A well at Loughton, in Epping Forest, has also yielded an ample supply of water from the lower greensand at a depth of 1,092 feet, the locality being about four miles south-east of Waltham.

MAN IS OF AIR.

SCIENCE has demonstrated that man, the being who performs great wonders, is formed of condensed air, or solidified and liquefied gases; that he lives on condensed as well as uncondensed air, and by means of the same agent moves the heaviest weights with the velocity of the wind. But the strangest part of the matter is, that thousands of these tabernacles formed of condensed air, are going on two legs occasionally, and on account of the production and supply of those forms of condensed air which they require for food and clothing, or on account of their honour and power, destroy each other in pitched battles by means of condensed air; and further, that many peculiar powers of the bodiless, conscious, thinking and sensitive being housed in his tabernacle, to be the result simply of its internal structure, and the arrangement of its particles or atoms; while chemistry supplies the clearest proof that, so far as concerns this, the ultimate and most minute composition and structure which is beyond the reach of our senses, man is, to all appearance, identical with the ox, or with the animal lowest in the scale of creation.

THE new materials for fabrics is called vegetable wool, and is described as being found on the top of the grass in the immense sheep runs of Western Australia, especially in and around the district of Perth. It is about half an inch in length, and is as soft as silk. A special commissioner is already in Australia investigating the value of the new material, and the extents of the districts wherein it may be obtained.

GERANIUMS.

INSTEAD of sacrificing fine plants by allowing them to stand out and be destroyed by frost, they may easily be preserved for use the next spring. A writer on this subject, in the "Floral Cabinet," says that last November he pulled from the earth a large scarlet geranium, together with a double one, tied strings round them and hung them in the cellar, which, by the way, was a very dry one. In March following he took them up leafless, and to all appearances dead, and putting them in some common earth, kept them moist. They soon showed life, and came out very well. He then transferred them to tubs for growing flowers in his garden about the last of May, when they began to bloom immediately, and have had a profusion of flowers ever since. No fertilizer seems better for them than hen manure and plaster. If the cellar is very damp, the geraniums should be put in boxes of sand through the winter.

The same party experimented on the amaryllis. One year ago, having one that did not look very nicely, he put it in the cellar to go to sleep until he called for it. In March he brought it out, not, however, looking very well; but he watered it and it soon blossomed; then letting it rest again awhile, merely keeping life in it, by again watering it thoroughly it bloomed anew. It has now its third bloom with one stalk of six beautiful flowers.

THE INVISIBLE COMMODORE;

OR,

THE SECRETS OF THE MILL.

CHAPTER. XXXI.

THE chagrin of the two pirates was even greater than their wonder.

They looked again and again in the empty canoe, unwilling to accept the evidence of their senses.

Then they looked at each other.

"They are certainly gone," muttered Captain Mallet.

"Yes, they are," returned the false major. "I didn't dream of such a thing. That we might run past them in the darkness, or that they might paddle in some particular direction, thus taking themselves out of our course—all accidents of that sort I was prepared for, but not for this sort of puzzle. Now, where are they?"

Mallet sent a keen glance around, listening intently.

"I see nothing—hear nothing," he muttered. "No one is near us, that is certain. The girls may have been gone three or four hours, and doubtless they have been, as the canoe is half full of water, and it is more likely to have leaked in than to have dashed over the sides."

"Yes, that's all clear enough," assented the false major. "They have been gone some hours. They can't have thrown themselves overboard—no, their suicide is out of the question. They have met Caribs, pirates, or British cruisers—more likely the former, as we saw no signs of a sail at nightfall. Yes, they have been picked up by somebody, either friends or foes, and the question is: Where are they at this moment?"

Mallet transferred himself from the raft to the boat abruptly, and began bailing out the water by which it was logged.

"The first job in hand, Morrel," he said, "is for us to get back to the island. And it will be easier, of course, for us to return in the canoe against the wind and current, than upon the raft. It is true, we could rig up a make-shift to hold the raft up to the wind, but the trip would be a long one. My idea is to paddle stoutly, and get back to the island as soon as possible—before daylight if we can."

"Yes, that is our only course," said the false major, as he hastened to join his efforts to those of his companion. "We ought to slip back unseen, if only in our own interest, and if a small craft has picked up the girls, we are more likely to find them at the island than in any other direction. I hate to abandon the raft, of course, but it would take us a whole day or more to sail it back to the island in the face of this wind."

The profound annoyance and disappointment with which they bailed out the canoe and established themselves in it, kept their tongues as busy as their hands, but hardly a grain of fact or probability was evolved from their discussions.

The only certainty was that the girls had disappeared, and that the eager pursuers were forced to turn back to the island they had quitted.

There was one good result arising from their annoyance, however: they worked hard, as a sort of relief to the pressure of their disappointment.

They had made a couple of handy paddles out of the oars they had brought with them, and the canoe was so light that they sent it through the water, even against the wind and current, with a speed that was truly surprising.

For two or three hours they toiled in this way unremittingly, taking their course from the stars, and at the end of this time an ejaculation from the lips of Mallet fixed the attention of his companion.

"You can see now how the case stands," added Mallet. "Look at that light!"

The false major followed the example of Mallet with a start of surprise.

"Sure enough!" he ejaculated. "The enemy is at the island!"

Resting from their labours a moment, the two pirates gazed eagerly at an immense fire which had suddenly flamed up into view on the island, which was still six or eight miles distant.

"The girls are there, no doubt," muttered Mallet, as he resumed work. "That fire is built by their captors!"

"And that fire is also a hint as to the nature of these captors!" suggested the false major. "Ten to one they are Caribs!"

"I agree with you, of course," returned Mallet; "and if Caribs, there is likely to be a large party of them—fifty, or a hundred, or even more. In any case, we must proceed with caution and cunning. We can effect a landing easy enough before daybreak, and stow ourselves away in the bushes until another night, or, at least, until we are rested from this worthless performance!"

The efforts of the two men resulted in their arrival at the island just as the day was breaking.

They were tempted to destroy the canoe, for fear it would be discovered, and so lead to a betrayal of their presence; but they concluded, after some debate, to cover it up completely in some dense bushes in the centre of an almost inaccessible marsh, and to take their chances of its detection.

"It is now too late to go near the camp of these people," said Mallet. "Besides, I am too tired to stir."

"And I, too," responded the false major. "I'd be sorry to have a quarrel with even a child at just this moment. The only thing we can do is to help ourselves to some of the food laid in by the girls, and devote the morning to sleep."

This proposal was duly acted upon. Only, instead of sleeping a few hours, the two pirates slumbered until late in the afternoon, so completely had their strength been exhausted by the many days and nights of peril and fatigue through which they had passed since leaving the pirates' retreat.

"Well, there's no harm done," was the first comment of Mallet, as he started up at last, becoming conscious of the lateness of the hour. "On the contrary, a great deal of good. I am myself again, and ready for business, whatever its nature."

"I can say as much," returned the false major. "I can't recall a time when I have been

so completely used up. Let's now have a bite, and then see if our neighbours are still here, and what they are doing."

A few minutes later the couple were stealing through a thick underbrush in the direction in which they had seen the fire on the previous night.

"It will be annoying if they have gone on, and are now fifty miles away," whispered Mallet, as they paused to listen and watch.

"We'll soon settle the question," responded the false major. "As these unknown parties, however, arrived against the wind, as we did, they are likely to be as tired as ourselves, and to remain here a day or two to recruit."

"True; I didn't think of that. They are here, no doubt, and we'll soon know who and what they are."

They went on hopefully, but with the strictest care and precaution.

At the end of quite a march they gained the necessary elevation to reconnoitre the whole district in which they had seen the fire.

"There they are," muttered Mallet.

The camp itself of the strangers was visible, as well as the smoke curling lazily above it. A score or more of savages were also visible, some of them lounging around the bluffs, and others in motion, several engaged in cooking over the fire, and two of them bringing water from a spring.

But the object that fixed the attention of the two watchers more particularly was an improvised tent, or lodge, which had been erected in the midst of the camp, and which was guarded by a couple of savages.

"They are Caribs, of course," muttered the false major, after a close survey of the scene. "and it would seem that they are under a chief of some consequence."

Mallet drew his breath hard, and a desperate look gleamed from his eyes.

"Not only is there such a chief there," he responded, "but that chief has fallen in love with one of the girls—or both of them—and has installed them in that hut."

The false major turned pale at the suggestion, so sharp was the pang of jealousy that convulsed his soul.

"You are right," he said. "No Carib would have built such a hut for himself. There's a chief with the party, and he is making himself agreeable to the captives. Ah! there he is!"

The sharp glances of the two pirates had not deceived them.

A tall and formidable-looking savage, in all the dignity of paint and feathers, had bowed himself out of the hut, retreating backwards, with an untutored grace that filled the watchers with envy.

And no sooner had this man faced about, and drawn his commanding figure erect, than the two pirates uttered simultaneously a sharp cry of annoyance and astonishment.

"Yes," it's Carobi himself," muttered Mallet.

The false major assented, his countenance becoming more serious than ever.

Carobi was a noted chieftain of the Caribs, being acknowledged and obeyed by a large majority of the Caribs of the West Indies and also by those scattered along the mainlands of the Caribbean.

He was brave, intelligent, lawless, murderous, and all else the Carib leaders of his times had learned to be under the dealings they had for a century carried on with the cut-throats of all nations who had been so freely vomited into those regions from Europe.

"Well, this is a bad show for us," muttered Mallet, as soon as he had taken a careful survey of the whole scene thus presented to his gaze. "There are at least a hundred of those wandering savages here, as is shown by the number of their canoes on the beach."

"But, perhaps, the girls are not here at all," suggested the false major. "They may have been picked up by another party."

"We'll soon solve the question," said Mallet, resolutely. "As soon as darkness sets in—but there they come."

He was right.

Essie and Florence were in the act of emerging from the hut in question, and in another moment they were sauntering in the direction of the very spot in which the two pirates were hidden.

"They must have seen us," gasped Mallet, in the first terror inspired by this movement.

"No, that's impossible," returned the false major. "They are only taking a walk, for which they have doubtless asked permission, and of course they will be well watched and guarded. All we have to do is to beat a retreat and keep out of their way."

"Can't we write a line to them, to the effect that we are here and that we will rescue them from those terrible creatures?" asked Mallet. "I'll wrap a paper of this sort around a stone, and perhaps I will have a chance to toss it to the captives."

He hastened to write a few lines to the effect indicated, and then the two men hid themselves near a sort of path it was now evident the captives would follow.

Indeed, such was the interested courage of Mallet in the case, that he did not hesitate to place himself in close proximity to the presumed route of the girls, after first sending the false major into secure concealment at no great distance.

The result of this proceeding was even more complete than Mallet dared to expect.

He not only gave his written message to the captives, but addressed to them a few hurried words, and was prompt enough in his movements thereafter to glide away unseen by any of the savages who were following closely upon the footsteps of Essie and Florence.

"It's done," whispered Mallet, as he rejoined his companion. "They know that we are here, and that we propose to help them."

"That's a point gained, of course," returned the false major. "But there are fearful odds against us. We can't do anything until after dark, nor even then, unless we can get the girls clear of the camp before the escape is detected."

"Oh! we'll succeed," said Mallet, with dogged resolution. "You remain here. I am going back to the path. When the girls come back, they will give us an answer."

He acted upon this purpose, but it seemed an age before the captives appeared again, returning in the direction of the camp, still followed and surrounded by a dozen of the savages.

"Don't trouble yourself," said Essie, as soon as she came abreast of the spot where Mallet was lying perdu in a dense thicket of bush and reed. "We don't intend to fall into your hands again. Better Caribs than pirates!"

The stinging effect of these words upon Mallet can be imagined.

His first impulse was to rush upon the captives and carry them off in broad daylight, but he fortunately controlled this desperate suggestion, and crawled away in silence to report the answer to his companion.

"Better Caribs than pirates," eh?" he concluded, gnashing his teeth together. "Oh! I will make the proud beauty repent those words, if she ever again falls into my clutches!"

"Well, she will," returned the false major, grimly, and with such a nervous agitation that Mallet could not help staring at him. "Look up out of these bushes, and take a good look directly seaward."

Mallet wonderingly complied and then a wild cry of surprise escaped him.

"One of our own schooners!" he muttered.

"Yes, one of our own," said the false major, rubbing his hands together gleefully. "She is, of course, looking for us. They think we have run away with their money."

"I'm sorry I took that course," muttered Mallet. "What is money in comparison with having a few hundred stout swords at your disposal?"

"Or what is money in comparison with the recapture of those girls?" demanded the false major, in breathless excitement. "See here, Mallet; it is not yet too late to set all to rights,

Every man is dead who ran away with us. Our secret is our own. Let's say, therefore, that we ourselves were carried off against our wishes because we endeavoured to prevent the conspirators from running away with the treasure!"

"Capital! Glorious!" gasped Mallet. "I see the point!"

"See? Of course you do! We'll go off at once in our canoe to the schooner. We'll tell the boys we have saved the treasure for them, and that all they have to do is to load it into the schooner."

"And clean out the Caribs—"

"And rescue the girls—all these things go without saying. You see, therefore," concluded the false major, "that the game is all in our own hands, and that we can soon be as powerful and dangerous as ever!"

"I do indeed!" muttered Mallet, with a savage oath. "To work at once?"

Rushing wildly away to the spot where they had left their canoe, the two pirates hurried the frail craft into the water, threw themselves into it, and pushed off in the direction of the schooner which had indeed just come in sight around the end of the island.

CHAPTER XXXII.

We must now see what had become, in the meantime, of Harry Clyde and his friends.

It will be remembered that we left them at the moment they succeeded in getting ashore from their wrecked craft, which had suddenly encountered one of those small and obscure reefs which have always rendered navigation in those regions dangerous and unpleasant.

"Let's see that we are all safely ashore," said Harry. "Yes, here we are—all five of us."

These five, it will be recalled, were Harry himself, Mrs. Clyde—his mother—Gov. Morrow, Captain Chuddley, and Tom Skeritt.

"Well, this is a pretty kettle of fish," growled Chuddley. "But, after all, we have escaped with our lives, and that is the first step, perhaps, to something better."

Mrs. Clyde was naturally in a state of mind bordering upon distraction.

"My poor daughter," she groaned, as she stood staring at the remaining fragments of the wrecked schooner as they ground upon the rocks. "She will perish miserably before we find her!"

"We must indeed fear the worst!" said Gov. Morrow, with a groan. "But all that mortals can do in such an emergency, that we will accomplish!"

"I like the end of your remark better than I do its commencement, Governor," said Harry, forcing a smile. "There is no occasion for despair—only grounds for thanking Heaven that our position is no worse. The wind is already falling, and the sea will have to follow the example."

"But what can we do, my dear son?" asked Mrs. Clyde.

"We shall make a raft, in due course, and continue our search," was Harry's response. "But this is not the work of a moment, and we must go to work with sense and sequence. The first thing to do is to save whatever we can from the wreck that is likely to be useful."

The day was now breaking, so that it was easy for the shipwrecked men to take note of their surroundings.

A couple of hours were spent upon the rocks and along the beach—hours as full of difficulty as of danger; but the result of their united efforts was the recovery of sufficient food and water for present emergencies, and of all the necessary materials for the construction of a raft, to say nothing of sundry clothing and other objects that were judged likely to be useful in the future.

The next thing in order was breakfast, and afterwards Harry and Tom Skeritt made a hasty survey of the island.

It was a small, low reef, only a mile in

extent, as we have already indicated, and hence it offered very few resources for a prolonged stay, even if such had been desirable or necessary.

"We shall have to emigrate, you see," said Harry, when he had briefly set forth the discoveries he had made. "There is no water, as far as I have seen, and very few birds or fishes. The signs of turtle are by no means promising; and as to waiting idly here in the hope of being picked up by some passing vessel, that would be simple madness. A ship will hardly come near this reef knowingly, and it may be fifty years before one will chance to be driven here by a tempest. We must begin building the raft at once."

Inspired by his active and hopeful example the rest of the shipwrecked men were soon working busily under his directions, and long before the day was over the raft was finished.

It lay in a sheltered nook on the leeward side of the reef, and no pains were spared in making it staunch and seaworthy, as well as of sufficient dimensions for the whole party.

A number of half-covered receptacles had been arranged in the floor of the raft for the reception of kegs of water, and such other objects as were essential to the voyage, and by sunset everything was ready for departure.

"The sooner we start now the better," said Harry, as he arose from the frugal repast he had named by courtesy his supper. "There is still quite a sea running, to be sure, and some wind, but both are getting less, and it is essential to get on while the wind remains in our favour. The pirate has gone with his prisoners in the same direction the wind is now blowing, and if he has had no better luck than ourselves he may have brought up upon some island not many leagues to the leeward. In any case, we can now stand away in the very direction the pirate has gone, and this is really the only hope we can have of the rescue of the captives."

To a proceeding so well defined and so urgent, there could of course be no objection, and not long after nightfall the little party embarked safely, and very soon thereafter got clear of the reef which had so unexpectedly interposed its jagged rocks between them and their purpose.

"Whatever may be before us," said Mrs. Clyde, with a sigh, "I am glad to be on the move again. I feel sometimes as if constant movement alone can save me from madness."

"I think we have all felt that way at times," said Governor Morrow; "but now that we are off for further discoveries, let us hope that our loved ones will soon be found and restored to us."

As changed as was the aspect of the scene from the tempest of the days preceding, Harry, nevertheless, had his hands full in the management of the raft, as ably as he was seconded by Tom Skeritt and his companions.

The night was finally worn away with constant care and discomfort—the raft and everything on it being constantly soaked—and when daylight came only the immensity of the sea was visible.

For awhile the explorers talked of their hopes and prospects, as they discussed their poor allowance of food, and then they all took refuge from their long weariness—all save Harry—in prolonged slumbers.

The afternoon was well advanced before there was a general stir on the raft, but the day was not destined to pass without new excitement.

A glimpse of distant land was reported, and with the aid of a glass saved from the wreck this distant object was soon made out to be the tree-crowned summit of an island.

The joy of the unhappy explorers at this circumstance was very great, notwithstanding all the uncertainties by which the fact was surrounded.

"It is one good thing that it is directly in our course," said Governor Morrow, "and that we shall be able to reach it in the course of the evening."

"Yes, and I dare hope we shall find the captives upon it," said Harry, who had been looking earnestly through his glass; "for there is a schooner at this moment off the north end of the island, which I take to be one of those belonging to the pirates!"

The glass was passed around, and various speculations and comments indulged in, but all agreed that the sail in question was indeed a pirate.

"It looks like one of those schooners that lay at anchor at the pirates' retreat, Tom," said our hero to his faithful ally. "In any case, we may accept its presence here as a proof that the pirates and their captives are not far distant!"

"But shall we not be seen by them?" asked Mrs. Clyde.

"No, mother. We shall hardly drift near enough to the island, before night sets in, to be seen by the pirates, and I will not raise our sail until after dark, so that there will not be the least danger of our being detected. But as soon as it's dark, I will crowd on all the speed possible, and not delay a moment the visit I propose to pay to these people before midnight."

By this time a new life had entered the soul of everyone present.

Even Mrs. Clyde rose superior to the gloom and despair by which she had so constantly been cast down, and was as full of timely suggestions as of courage.

Sticking to the course they had marked out for themselves, the resolute explorers arrived abreast of the island early in the evening.

The schooner they had seen had long since disappeared behind the island, or upon its opposite side, and many were the speculations and discussions to which this circumstance gave rise.

But a fact of still greater interest was a bright fire and all the aspects of a camp, which were detected in due course upon one of the wooded slopes of the island.

"There are the pirates, no doubt," said Harry, after a long survey of the scene, "and it is there that we must look for the captives. Of course, we will all go on to the island, but I shall go ashore alone on a scout, leaving the raft anchored just out of sight, in the mouth of some retired creek or off some good landing-place."

"This is all very well, except that I must go ashore with you, sir," said Tom Skeritt. "You cannot refuse me."

"No, I won't, Tom," returned Harry, smiling. "And I dare say I shall need you. Those rascals hanging about the fire are numerous enough, in all conscience, to make a visit to their camp a ticklish undertaking."

The night closed in gently.

"And now we'll lose no time in getting ashore, Tom," proposed Harry. "I do not believe we are now near enough to have been detected, but two hours of resolute work ought to bring us to the land."

The shore was duly reached in about the time expected, and the raft was duly anchored at no great distance from it.

Then Harry and Tom armed themselves to the best advantage, arranged their signals with their friends, and took their departure, lowering themselves quietly into the water, and swimming to the nearest point.

"My plan is simple enough, Tom," said Harry, leading the way into the bushes. "If the pirates are here, the girls are here with them. Our first point is that hut we saw—if it really was one."

The couple pressed on rapidly, pausing occasionally to watch and listen.

At last they came to the very spot from which the two pirates had surveyed the camp in the course of the afternoon preceding.

From this point Harry and Tom could see everything—the camp, the Caribs strolling about the hut, and—yes, there was no mistake about it!—a couple of drooping figures near the hut, which the watchers readily made out to be Essie and Florence.

"You see, Tom," breathed Harry. "These are not pirates, but Caribs! But it's all the same to us. My sister and Miss Morrow have

fallen into the hands of the savages. My plan is—

The remark was never finished.

At that very instant arose behind and beside the two men a series of tremendous yells, as of ten thousand demons, and a large body of men were seen advancing at a full run over the ridges and out of the adjacent ravines, and sweeping down like a torrent upon the Carib camp.

At the head of these men were Mallet and the false major.

"Quick, Tom!" cried Harry, whose resolve was instantly taken. "Follow me, and do as I do!"

A few swift bounds brought the couple into view of the two girls, who had started to their feet, and faced the assailants, even as had the whole force of the Caribs.

"It is I, Miss Morrow—Harry!" shouted our hero, as he rushed forward and seized Essie by the hand, whirling her away as if she had been a feather, while Tom rendered a like service to Florence. "Quick, now! While the Caribs and pirates are fighting, we can slip off unharmed and unnoticed."

The event proved the truth of this reasoning.

The captives and the rescuers were clear of the Carib camp before they were missed, and in twenty minutes thereafter they were safe aboard the raft and in the arms of their friends, explaining in wild joy all that had happened.

At an early hour of the following morning, as if to crown all the mercies which had been extended to Harry and his friends, a British cruiser came gliding past the island.

Upon being duly hailed, she lost no time in taking aboard the fugitives, and then she sent a boat's crew, with Harry and Tom Skeritt at its head, to explore the scene of conflict of the previous night. It was seen that the battle had been hot and heavy, and the killed and wounded many.

Among the former were Mallet and the false major, as well as the principal men of the Caribs, both parties having been incited to the last degree of ferocity by the escape of the captives, and each party having ascribed the sudden disappearance of the intended victims to the other.

What had become of the few survivors of the terrific strife, nobody knew or cared. It was enough that they had vanished.

"And now there is only one thing more to detain us here," said the commander of the cruiser, when Harry and his friends came off from the shore. "It seems that the pirates have buried a great treasure on the island, and the young ladies think they can tell us, from some remarks they overheard, just where that treasure is. We'll accordingly help ourselves to it!"

And they did.

But brighter far than all the gold and silver which was thus secured, and which was used by the Colonial Government in repairing the losses caused by the pirates—for, of course, Harry and his friends would not touch the blood-stained stuff—brighter far, we say, was the future that speedily opened to our hero and heroine and all the other actors of our story.

That Harry and Essie were married not long after the events we have narrated, may be taken for granted, and that Governor Morrow and Tom Skeritt and all the rest made the Government House at Barbadoes ring with joy on that occasion, and for many long years thereafter, may also be accepted as a matter of course.

[THE END.]

SIR GEORGE AIRY, the astronomer-royal, expresses much disappointment at the photographs of the transit of Venus obtained by the British expeditions. To the eye they appear good, but when placed under the microscope for measurement they prove to be faint and badly defined.

THE STEPPING STONES.

OLD Miss James sat nodding in her arm-chair, on one side of the broad hearth, and her grey cat sat nodding on the other; but not for the sake of the fire, because September being still young, of course, there was none.

But Miss James, and her cat, were creatures of habit.

At a certain hour in the afternoon they were always to be found nodding in that particular place.

Nesta Vane, Miss James' betwixthing, pretty, and thoroughly spoiled niece, sat near an open window, at the further end of the immense drawing-room, having her embroidery frame before her, and a book on the chair by her side; but she had not, for the last half hour, either placed a stitch or glanced at a page.

She looked out across the garden, gorgeous with the early autumn flowers; she glanced up at the family portraits on the wall, then at Miss James and her cat; but wherever her eyes turned, her face did not lose the decidedly discontented expression which had been deepening upon it since her reverie began.

It was impossible to endure the stillness another instant!

She should upset a chair, or utter a war-whoop, or do something utterly preposterous, to frighten Aunt James and Lord Bacon out of their senses, if they did not at once get away from the drowsy atmosphere of the apartment, which appeared to have the effect of irritating, instead of soothing her nerves.

But as noiselessly as she crossed the drawing-room, Lord Bacon heard her; he opened one eye, and glanced at her in stern reproof, then glanced towards his mistress, and perceiving that she had not wakened, fell to nodding again, but as he forgot to shut his eye, his appearance was so irresistibly comical that Nesta had much ado to repress a fit of laughter.

She reached the great stone colonnade which ran along the front of the mansion, and for a little, forgot her private causes of dissatisfaction with the world in general, in her delight at the beautiful view.

The river was the Medway, the town in the distance, Chatham; but neither the river nor the town of to-day; for it was September, 1790, when Nesta Vane stood there; and though now the spot is within reach of the great metropolis, the mansion and estate were so far away then, that a visit thither assumed quite the character of a pilgrimage.

Nesta determined to go for a walk; no sauntering ramble about the grounds, but a real walk along the highway, or through fields, or across the wood towards the river, whithersoever her vagrant fancy might lead, in spite of Aunt James' prejudices against young ladies allowing themselves such liberties.

Since her governess left (exactly six months ago, to Nesta's delight, for she had felt that, of all indignities ever offered a girl past seventeen, that of holding her fast in the shackles of a disciple of Minerva was the greatest), when she insisted upon a long walk Aunt James had obliged her to be followed by one of the men servants, or else by her old nurse.

But, to-night, Nesta was bent on having her own way; no man or woman born should follow her; and as her old nurse was indulging in a toothache it would be cruel to take her out; though, personally, Nesta might have suffered less than ordinary from her society, as her countenance was so swollen that she could scarcely speak.

Away went Nesta, down the avenue, out of the great gates—across the road, over a stile, and on, through fields and woodland, walking as fast as if she were trying to escape from some persecutor.

And so she was. But as that persecutor was her own fancy, she essayed in vain to outwalk its unwelcome companionship.

Nesta would be eighteen in a very few weeks, so she was old enough to have her troubles, and

young enough to be as rebellious under them as most people are, till they have lived to learn that such rebellion is a mere waste of vitality, and an added pain.

Nesta's mother had been an Irish lady, whose only sister had quarrelled with her over an inheritance and greatly wronged her.

The young girl had married Mr. Vane, then visiting America, and returned with him to England.

When Nesta was about fourteen this aunt, whom she had never seen, fell ill of a lingering, internal disease. And her conscience, in her heart, caused her to relent towards Mrs. Vane.

She sent a trusty messenger to obtain her sister's forgiveness, and a pledge that when Nesta was eighteen she should marry her cousin, so that the fortune, which had caused the estrangement between the two mothers, might be enjoyed by their respective children.

Mrs. Vane was a dying woman when the messenger came—dying of the same disease as her twin sister. On her death-bed she made her husband and daughter promise that they would obey her last wishes.

In those days such family arrangements were too common to excite any surprise, and young people who ventured to dispute their parent's will as to the disposition of their future would have been regarded as almost outside the pale of humanity.

The idea met with Mr. Vane's hearty concurrence; he was straightened in means; his own health precarious; and it was a relief to have Nesta's destiny settled; to know that she would be rich, and certain of a home across the seas, far beyond the troubles of this country, which he, like many another, believed would only go on from bad to worse.

As for Nesta, she would have promised anything, from burning herself to the sacrifice of her own soul, to enable her darling mother to die in peace.

Until her thirteenth birthday Nesta gave very little thought to the matter; after that, for a season, the affair presented itself to her mind in a romantic aspect; and it was rather pleasant to weave day-dreams, in which that unknown cousin had a place.

Certain letters (those written by Nesta, of course, subject to a vigorous inspection from Aunt James, before they were sent) passed between the engaged pair.

It will be difficult for the youth of this generation to believe the fact, but Hugh's epistles commenced with "Honoured Madame," and Nesta's were headed, "Respected Sir," and on both sides the correspondence would have been worthy, in the matter of stilted language, of Dr. Johnson and Hannah More, and was calculated to afford either about as much knowledge of the other's character as *Rasselas* offers of the world in which we live.

Oddly enough, Nesta had not even a portrait of her affianced husband. Twice he had sent a picture; each time it had failed to reach her; then Aunt James got superstitious, and would not hear of his trying again.

Suddenly, a few months before this September day, a change came over Nesta—a feeling of revolt and rebellion, which grew into actual loathing.

She hated the thought of the marriage; she abhorred her future husband, with all the passion of her nature; and she was capable of going to excessive lengths in this line.

She kept her thoughts to herself, however, for she knew if she ventured to express them Aunt James would pronounce her mad, and her father, dearly as he loved her, would be capable of agreeing with the verdict, and of shutting her up till she decided to come to her senses.

She indulged in various visions of running away, but that was no easy matter in those days.

Forced to relinquish this idea, she thought of poison as a remedy for her miseries; but having a practical mind, under all her nonsense, she recollected that she could no more get at *ludanum* than she could at the philosopher's stone. So she waited.



[CROSSING THE BROOK.]

The time had come very near now. Hugh might arrive any day. He had been expected on the last ship, but was prevented sailing by the sudden death of his godfather, an important relationship at that era.

She might as well be a slave, sold like a common chattel! Oh, it was dreadful. And Nest raged and suffered, with all the force of her years; but no loophole of escape presented itself.

She had only one resource. She wrote verses sometimes, and very sweet verses they were, and she kept a journal, but this latter comfort she had to give up, for she got frightened when she read over the pages she had written during her sleepless nights.

She really had changed in appearance during these weeks, but the household did not notice it—the people constantly about one never do notice; and must drop like a worn-out cart-horse, in the middle of the route, before one's family would discover that one had ever endured so much as a headache.

Then, too, Mr. Vane was absent just now. He had been called away about a week before this eventful September afternoon I am writing of; for it was eventful, as you will see, if I can ever get at its culmination.

Aunt James was old, seventy-six, and though she could read fine print without spectacles, it was natural enough she should be blind to the alteration which Nest saw in her own face. Nest told herself that it was natural, and despised human nature in general for its weakness,

though she could not despise dear, prim, good old Aunt James.

Yes, greatly changed was Nest. Her countenance had not lost its bloom, or perceptibly grown thin, but it had gathered a deeper, more earnest expression, and as for her eyes (always Nest's chief beauty), they were positively startling—only, as I said, there was nobody to startle.

People visited only on set occasions, among Aunt James's circle.

Once in a while the Phillipses, the Van Rensselaers, and the Jenkineses, and the heads of all the clans, came to the manor for a solemn dinner, or a more solemn dance; but this was not the season for dinners or dances and visitors were few and far between.

Nest had walked faster and further than she had any idea of, so engrossed by her own fancies that the sunset burst in full magnificence before she recollected that it was necessary to retrace her steps, if she expected to reach home while day lasted.

She looked about—she was not lost, but a long way from the house, a long way from the road, down in the depths of a natural meadow, not far from the river.

At her left spread a dense wood, but her shortest route back to the highway led through it, only in order to reach the path she must cross a tolerably wide and very deep brook. There were stepping stones to be sure, but Nest had a horror thereof; only the spring pre-

vious a little child would have been drowned in crossing them, except for Nest.

The brook was swollen by rains, the surface of the stones wet and slippery, and the child fell into the water.

Nest rescued it, and did not even know, at the time, that she was frightened; but always after, when she reached the spot, she could see the poor little thing falling, hear the thud of her body as it struck the current, and felt as if under the influence of a nightmare.

She must cross the stones now; so doing would shorten her homeward walk by at least three-quarters of a mile.

Then, the very fact that she hesitated (there had been late August rains, and the brook looked dismally like that April torrent which had so nearly engulfed the poor child) made Nest the more determined not to be cowed.

She belonged to an age when the women of our country were physically brave.

Out from a little clump of alders suddenly appeared a young man—a very handsome one, too.

He put into his pocket a letter which he had been reading; he bared his head and came forward, as chivalrous as a mediæval knight.

"Will you permit me to assist you across the brook, madame?" he asked. "My desire to be of service must be my excuse for intruding; on that score, perhaps, you will deign to grant me forgiveness."

Now was not that stately?—Could any of the glib, abrupt mannered youth of our day equal it?

But Nest did not possess a dignified old Aunt James for nothing. Wild as she was, she had fine manners at command when she chose to produce them!

She made a courtesy, so deep that any modern belle who tried to copy it would inevitably tumble backwards, and so grand that it would freeze the soul of every modern dandy, and while performing this salute she said, graciously:

"Sir, you are only too kind! I accept your gallant offer with sincere gratitude!"

I would hardly, myself, believe she accomplished the speech, if I had not read the very words in a letter written by her not long after this adventure, and preserved to the present day, by a succession by careful hands.

The young gentleman, with a bow as awful as her obeisance, took the tips of her fingers of her right hand in his, and led her down the bank.

On the edge of the first stone Nest paused; a revelation had just been granted her. People knew nothing about magnetism in those days, and as Nest was not Scotch she was ignorant of the marvels of second sight; but she had had a revelation.

She knew who this elegant cavalier was, as well as if they had grown up together, her cousin Hugh, and no other.

Female obstinacy was the same in the garden of Eden that it is to-day.

Once she had jumped at her conclusion, Nest felt better satisfied with it than she would have done with any proofs which certificates of birth and pedigree could have afforded—she was face to face with Hugh.

Not at all the Hugh of her fears, nothing commonplace about him.

Those passionate eyes were born to command; that womanly sweet mouth was made to woo, and it expressed firmness enough also to compel compliance.

She saw a horse tied to a tree on the other side of the way, and as she looked that way, while they were walking down the bank, the gentleman said:

"Destiny is more amiable than the poets admit. Just before reaching the wood, on the opposite side, where I left my horse, I came to two roads. I was uncertain which to take; I may consider myself born under a lucky star. I took this, and though I found it was not the highway, my coming has enabled me to be of slight service."

"It is a road that leads to the river," Nest

said, "indeed, down to Mrs. Wilson's place. She keeps it in repair."

Then they were at the edge of the brook, Nest's foot on the first stone.

He drew her onward in silence. She obeyed the impulse of his hand, busy with her own thoughts.

Midway in the stream the stones were further apart.

The centre one had been carried off by a freshet.

He felt her fingers tremble.

"Do not be frightened," he said. "Shut your eyes, and I will lead you across in safety."

She opened her eyes wide instead, and looked at him.

Ah! I cannot describe that glance, so arch, so mischievous, with a deeper feeling expressed under.

It is only a marvel to me that my last century knight did not lose his head completely and fall into the torrent, dragging her after him, thereby reversing the legend of Lorely so far as the reason for the terrible catastrophe was concerned.

If Nest's eyes had spoken out what was in her mind they would have said:

"I am the end and object of your journey. Ah! fate was wiser than I. Hugh, welcome to England."

But the young knight did not tumble, and Nest did not speak.

In due course they reached the opposite bank of the stream.

"If you will permit me to advise you," said the knight, "you will sit down and rest for a while."

Nest did sit down.

She was quite mistress of herself now, but not of the occasion, in so much as she was in doubt whether to let him know who she was or try to mystify him hopelessly.

"I must not keep you," she said. "If you are going to Mrs. Wilson's you must get there before twilight, else the old man won't open the gates. He still fortifies the lodge at sunset as if a war was going on."

"I have not the honour of her acquaintance," he answered. "I am a stranger, and only landed at Chatham last night."

"Indeed!" said Nest, and longing to laugh. "Then, if you are going on your journey, you will not more than reach a comfortable sleeping place before dusk."

"I am not going," he replied.

She arose with great dignity.

She was laughing internally, but not a feature in her face betrayed the fact.

Should she tell him at once, she thought, who she was, or wait till she saw him at the manor, and so enjoy his astonishment, for Nest was woman enough to perceive the effect her beauty had produced.

But if she waited her Aunt James would be a witness.

In the meantime he was saying:

"Madame, I could wish that the river had been an ocean, and the stepping-stones the path eternal. I thank you for having accepted my poor aid."

"Nay, do not usurp the gratitude which belongs to me," returned Nest, suffocating with concealed laughter, not at his stilted words or hers; their mutual phrases seemed proper, but at the thoughts in her mind.

Yes, she must tell. Patience was not her forte.

"If you are stopping in the neighbourhood we may probably meet," she said.

Having waited an instant she added, rather quickly:

"I am Miss Vane, of the manor."

He did not spring forward. He stood calm and dignified.

Again he bowed low, and said:

"You have given me a new saint to name in my prayers, Miss Vane. Once more I thank you."

Nest's head whirled.

What did this mean?

In another instant he was saying, in a very different voice:

"I cannot tell if we shall meet. I must not dare to say what this encounter has been to me. May I have the pleasure of walking with you to the road?"

"Thanks, no," she answered. "I shall take that path," pointing to one which led away through the trees. "It will lead me to our own grounds very quickly, but your horse could not follow it. Farewell, sir."

She was gone.

She thought he called after her; but she did not look back.

She fled with the speed of a rabbit, and never checked her course till she reached home.

She waited till bedtime, in a state of wild expectancy.

But no Hugh appeared.

The next morning did not bring him either, and Nest was uncertain whether to be grieved or indignant.

That afternoon her aunt asked her to go and inquire after one of their pensioners, about half a mile off, who had been ill.

Nest was supposed to have taken old Jack to carry the little basket of delicacies which Miss James had prepared.

But Nest carried the basket herself, and left old Jack serenely asleep in the flower-garden, with his head pillowed upon a stone.

She was sorely perplexed.

She hated to give up the idea that the man she had met was Hugh Mordaunt.

But it looked very much as if she had made a blunder.

Surely, if the stranger were her future bridegroom, he would have appeared at the manor before now.

Then she met the knight, face to face, not far from Mrs. Lonsome's little dwelling.

He came towards her, hat in hand; asked after her health; was rejoiced to find she had slept; talked a little of the weather, and then said, suddenly:

"I am not gone yet, after all. Do you know I could not tear myself away from this picturesque place?"

"We, its inhabitants, think it very lovely,"

Nest said.

She walked slowly on, and he walked beside her, talking still of the weather and the beautiful views.

But his eyes spoke a much more serious language.

She left him abruptly at last. A new idea had suddenly occurred to her, and she required to ruminate thereupon.

It was Hugh.

Again she felt as certain of that as of her own identity.

He knew her.

She had told her name, but he believed himself unrecognised.

He was impetuous enough, eager enough for her affection to win it, if possible, in a way that should lift their intercourse entirely out of the commonplace, traffic-like footing upon which their parents had condemned them to rest.

Now all these convictions, on the part of Nest, were not such proofs of folly as similar thoughts would be in a girl of our day.

It was not surprising that she should have found Hugh out.

Strangers of that class were rarities in the neighbourhood.

Had he been a friend of any of the magnates of the district his coming would have been heralded in advance.

No, it was Hugh. There could be no question about that.

And how well he played his part!

Only the eagerness in her eyes betrayed him, and Nest smiled at the evidence of her power, slight as it was.

But then he had become a hero to her from the instant that the motive for his conduct flashed upon her.

He left her very soon, with no expressed hope of a future meeting.

But that would have been impertinence, as she was not supposed to recognise him, and she knew perfectly well that, by some means or

other he would find her again before the set of the next day's sun.

And he did—found her when and where she least expected to see him.

She would not leave the grounds. Since she must appear to regard him as a stranger to go now where she was likely to meet him would be unmaidenly.

Solitude, too, seemed pleasanter than it had done of late, for it was peopled with pleasant fancies.

And when he came upon her, and seemed surprised when he learned that he had strayed upon her father's estate, gained time to stop by apologising.

Then she dropped her book, and as he handed it back he looked at the title.

Then more talk about the author, whom the young gentleman had met, a French poet of the last century, as famous in his day as are any one of our prodigies in this, now as completely forgotten as—we will hope, our prodigies may not by the succeeding age.

A tolerably long interview, and a pleasant one, but no results, as far as a revelation of his personality was concerned.

After he had gone Nest began to be vexed that he should think so lightly of her as to imagine that, ignorant who he might be, she would thus hold free intercourse with him.

Still, the satisfaction of recollecting what feeling inspired this concealment on her part consoled her.

Be shocked if you like, but the pair met every day for a week.

I insist that Nest's firmly rooted conviction in regard to the man rendered her conduct not only natural but excusable, though after all the two are controvertible terms.

Miss James was secluded in her rooms poring over letters from dead brothers or lovers.

She was a deliciously obstinate woman, and would not have emerged until the tenth day, as was her rule, even if the whole staff of domestics had pounded at her doors.

Mr. Vane was still detained, as his letters informed his daughter, so there was nobody to take cognisance of her actions, nobody to warn the poor child.

Daily the young couple met, and it had ceased to be by accident. Yet, Hugh had given no explanation, and sometimes, in her solitary hours, Nest upbraided herself for her lack of pride, in allowing this state of affairs to continue.

Then it seemed to her as if she heard her mother's voice in utterance of joyous content, and more than all, Hugh loved her, ah, she knew that, carefully as he guarded his tongue, she knew that!

Still, very often her delicacy rebelled. She would not meet him as she had promised. But he always found her out; no matter which way she wandered, he was sure to come upon her.

And one day he did so, when some chance words of Aunt James—words, not intended to apply to her, had shown Nest clearly the error of her conduct; and she felt ready to die with shame and regret.

And he discovered her weeping in the wood, fell on his knees before her, and for the first time poured forth the story of his love.

His very insanity brought back her composure. She dried her eyes and looked at him with the same bewildering, mischievous expression which had shone in her eyes on the first day they met, when, as he was helping her over the stepping stones, the certainty that "he was he" had been suddenly revealed to her.

"Get up, Hugh Mordaunt," she said, laughing and crying at once. "Are you so blind as to think I have not known you all along? Why, if I had not, what sort of woman must I have been?"

She stopped. He had risen and was standing before her looking utterly astounded.

"You are my cousin, Hugh!" she exclaimed, "I know you are!"

Perhaps, in this last ejaculation, was the result responding to some sudden, wild doubt.

born, lightning-like in her soul, by his altered manner.

"My name is Harry Graves," he answered slowly. "I have meant to tell you—I feared you were labouring under a misapprehension. Oh, forgive me that I did not speak, these moments were so sweet to me—I could not risk—"

He was talking to the air—the woods—Nest had fled.

What the girl suffered during the next few hours is beyond the power of words to describe; had no relief come, I think before morning she must have gone mad.

That evening, when she went into her room, she found a letter on the table; how it got there she did not stop to think; that she ought not to read it was a recollection as far from her mind.

It was from him, telling his love, promising if she would meet him once more that he would tell the whole, at least so far as he could; begging her to believe that he was honourable and true, warning her that she cared for him, that the engagement which he knew of between her and her cousin, though she had never mentioned it, could not be binding, she could not love a man whom she had never seen, she would not let the will of others break the heart of the man who loved her.

She went to sleep in tears, with the letter clasped close to her bosom; her last waking thought a determination never to see Harry Graves again.

She did not blame him, he was noble and good: only herself and her unpardonable folly were in fault.

She woke in the same right frame of mind; passed the morning in that correct mood—the midday.

Up: the very moment when his letter said he should be waiting for her, Nest held firm. But as the clock struck the last chime of the fateful hour she started from her seat; and impelled by some force superior to her own volition, ran downstairs, out of the house, and through the shrubberies and park so rapidly, that she had no time to think, till reaching a break in the wood she saw him at a little distance.

Even then she could only think enough to be grateful that at least this parting interview was granted to her.

He hurried towards her; he tried to take her hand; but when she held it back he said:

"You are right. I beg your pardon—I only asked for this meeting in order to beseech your forgiveness."

"No!" cried Nest, bravely. "It is I who have done wrong—I—and I can never forgive myself."

"I can't bear that!" he exclaimed. "Don't slander yourself. Nest, you are the truest, noblest woman that ever lived. Must I go away for ever? Nest, Nest! you do care—say that you do!"

He caught one fleeting glance, then she turned her head aside.

"You must not ask me anything," she answered. "You said in your letter that you believed me. Oh, I did think you were Hugh, indeed I did."

She stopped, her utterance choked by a sob, but before he could speak she hurried on:

"Good-bye—I must go. I shall never see you again—unless—unless—"

"Unless what, Nest?"

"Unless you come to my father, after I have told him the truth," she said. "I think I shall die in telling him, but I'll do it—I will!"

And away she ran, and never paused till she reached the shrubberies near the house; then she sank on the ground, exhausted, faint; and before she could find courage to look up again the twilight had gathered.

She rose and went on towards the manor. As she gained the terrace steps she saw her father, who had returned unexpectedly.

Her first impulse was to flee, but he came quickly forward and caught her in his arms, saying:

"My darling little girl—is she glad to have

me back? How you tremble, I frightened you. You must bear more joy than that—childie. Hugh has come!"

She slipped from his embrace, down upon the flags at his feet, her hands upraised in eager pleading, her eyes mad with pain.

"Listen," she groaned, "listen! You'll kill me, I think. I hope you will. I can't live like this! I won't see Hugh! Do you hear? I won't see him—I love another man—save me, save me!"

Her father did not speak. He lifted her gently, tenderly.

She could feel his heart beat tumultuously as he pressed her close against it.

She strove again to plead—he whispered:

"Don't try to tell me now, take time. I am your father, be at rest. Don't think even—come to Aunt James, little one—come."

Reproaches might have given her strength, by rousing a feeling that she had been unjustly treated; but this kindness and sympathy left her more dead than alive.

She let him carry rather than lead her up the stairs; he threw open the door of Aunt James's saloon, exclaiming:

"Hugh, this child refuses to marry you, and I will not cross her; she shall have her own way, make your peace if you can."

The door had shut, Nest was alone with the man whom she had so deeply, but so unwittingly, wronged.

She could not look up, she grasped instinctively at a chair near, and shut her eyes.

Then through the whirl in her brain she heard a voice say:

"Look at me, Nest; look at me!"

It was her lover's voice that called; it was her lover who knelt at her feet, only for an instant, though, the next he held her fast in his strong embrace.

"They made me do it," he hurried on, in eager pleading, "your father and Aunt James. Do forgive me! Oh, I did so want to be loved—I had worshipped you so long; ever since the day I received the picture they sent without your knowledge. And I wrote to Aunt James, and she told me how to act! But I never dreamed of making you suffer like this—Nest, Nest, forgive me!"

Only an inarticulate murmur, she heard, but words were past her reach.

"I didn't tell my story, Nest! I am Harry Mordaunt Graves—I took my godfather's name. Darling little one, Aunt James was not so blind as she seemed! She knew how wretched you were, and so brave as you have been, so determined to do right! Oh, Nest, forgive us all, we meant it for your happiness—Nest, Nest!"

But Nest was lying—white and senseless, her head pillowed on his breast, though she had heard enough to realise, when consciousness came back, that her happiness of the past days was no delusive vision—only a part of the actual years which lay beyond.

F. L. B.

FACETIE.

PAYING FOR A PEARL.

THE name of Margaret is generally known to signify Pearl. How comes it that Mr. Plimsoll, or Mr. Burt, or some other opponent of the Duke of Connaught's Establishment Bill, failed to observe that the Princess Marguerite of Germany would prove a pearl of great price to Mr. John Bull?

—Punch.

THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.—General Society.

—Punch.

WORTH HIS SALT (to the Royal Polytechnic).—Professor Pepper.

—Punch.

A MISAPPLICATION OF TERMS.

To call a young lady who sedulously selects the dances in which she will take a part a hoper.

—Fun.

MEN OF SOUND PRINCIPLES.—Musicians.

—Fun.

MUCH NEEDED PERMISSIVE BILL.

ONE that will keep money from getting "tight."

—Funny Folks.

THE OCCUPATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.—Fighting.

—Funny Folks.

BAENUM advertised for a cherry-coloured cat. An Irishman answered and offered to bring him a fine Tom cherry-coloured pussy for twenty dollars in advance. The money was sent, and a black cat brought. To Barnum's remonstrance, the Irishman, with a shrug of his shoulders, asked Barnum if he had never seen black cherries, if so this cat was cherry colour.

WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLIND.

SCOTCH TOURIST: "Can you tell me if this is a High Church, my man?"

LABOURER: "Hout ay, man, it's got a gallery on't."

—Judy.

CAREFUL.

BERTIE: "Auntie, do you like pear-drops?"

AUNTIE: "Yes, my dear."

BERTIE: "Ah, then I think I'll get uncle Frank to keep my packet for me, after all."

—Funny Folks.

WHAT species of bird has neither feathers nor beak?—The lady-bird.

—Funny Folks.

USED UP.—A Parasol—when the sun shines.

—Funny Folks.

SALUTARY CAUTION.

SERVANT: "Now, look here. In future, if you don't bring the things I order I won't have 'em, and if I don't have 'em I'll return 'em."

THE "CENTRE OF TRADE."—A.

—Funny Folks.

A MORNING CALL.

EMILY: "Oh! I am so glad to find you at home, Gertrude; I wish to introduce to you the new County Surveyor, and—"

GERTRUDE (slightly deaf): "The Countess of Ayr! I am sure we are very proud to welcome her ladyship, and shall hope to improve our acquaintance."

The visitors have doubts as to their own identity.

—Fun.

A LIGHT BUSINESS.—The gas company's.

—Fun.

A BOATFUL IDEA.

MR. FOWLER, the American who lately essayed to cross the Channel in a pair of canoe-like water-boots some 11 feet in length, will doubtless hear numerous opinions of the efficiency of his invention. But one thing he cannot deny about it, whether he be successful or not, and that is, that he has put his foot in it.

—Fun.

THE EFFECTS OF THE LATE RAINS.

FIRST ROAD SWEEPER: "Sad thing about Bill, ain't it? Been out of work for three months."

SECOND DITTO: "Well, and no wonder; he's all very well at the dry, but he ain't old enough to manage the slush; why, he'd drown the people."

—Fun.

A MOTTO FOR AN ENTHUSIASTIC AERONAUT.—"Air-or-naught."

—Fun.

A VAGUE ADDRESS.

MR. BOLT, on leaving his lodgings, stated for his landlady's information that he was going to live in Elsewhere-road.

—Fun.

TIME.

PEOPLE have different notions of time. A landlord who is his own rent-collector, recently called on an old tenant, who with pale, trembling lips, faltered:

"I'm very sorry, but times are so bad, and—and—I am not quite ready. If you could only give me a little time."

"Well, well, you have always been a good payer," said the landlord. "A little time—oh? Certainly. I am going upstairs, and—I will look in as I come down!"

THE Maiden's Band of Hope.—A hus-band.

—Funny Folks.

PHILOSOPHICAL EXCURSIONIST.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN (politely to middle-aged spinster opposite, evidently one of Cook's tourists): "And where, may I ask, are you going next?"

MIDDLE-AGED SPINSTER: "Oh! Let me see! I am going to Geneva!"

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN: "Going to Geneva! Why, you are in Geneva!"

MIDDLE-AGED SPINSTER: "Am I really? Oh, then I'm going to Milan!" —Punch.

"How did my little girl get on with her alphabet?" asked a mother of a school-teacher. "She was lost at C, ma'am," was the reply.

HASTY GENERALISATION.

MAMMA: "We'd better go in, darling! It threatens to rain."

HARRY: "Oh! then it won't!"

MAMMA: "Why?"

HARRY: "Papa always threatens to rip me! but he never does!" —Punch.

A COMMON INTEREST.

RECTOR'S DAUGHTER (invited to tenants' ball at Big House): "I say, Miss Tucker, when are you coming to try on our dresses? I suppose you are very busy?"

MISS TUCKER: "Yes, miss, so busy I have not had time yet even to think of my own dress!" —Punch.

THE FUTURE LITTLE GAME OF CANADA.—Lawn tennis. —Fun.

A TAKING PERSON.—The policeman. —Fun.

INS AND OUTS.

IRISH INNKEEPER (to "Boots," &c.): "H'Where's Biddle? Out, is she? Bad luck to the hussy! She'll go out twenty tomes for wonce she'll come in!" —Punch.

PHENOMENAL INJURY.

NEIGHBOUR: "Well, farmer, what's brought you into town?"

FARMER: "Whoy, O'm here on a lawr case. Some feller's been an' give one o' my hands a black eye!" —Funny Folks.

A FLOWER That's Talk Entirely.—A "flower of speech."

MEDICINE for Monarchs.—Castor Royal.

—Funny Folks.

To Make Money go a Long Way—Give it to a beggar on horseback.

WHEN must a man be ludicrously impecunious?—When he cannot even "keep his countenance." —Funny Folks.

"Ha! ha!" ejaculated a rich old bachelor, pointing at an infant nephew that was furiously squalling. "You already have a wroth-child (Rothschild) in the family!" They all laughed so at his joke that he made the angry little joker his heir.

STATISTICS.

THE MILITIA AND YEOMANRY.—A return has been issued showing the training establishment of each regiment of Militia in the United Kingdom for the year 1877. It appears that the strength of the establishment for all arms was 136,543 officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates, and the number wanting to complete (being the difference between the number enrolled and the establishment), 18,593. There were 99,850 of all arms present at the inspection last year. The number of militia reserve men enrolled during the year was 7,682, and the number effective at training 27,343. Another return has been issued showing the state of the yeomanry cavalry in Great Britain at the annual inspection last year. The total strength of the corps was 11,399, and of these 9,465 were present at the annual inspection. The full strength of the establishment should have been 13,606, but 2,018 were wanting to complete it.

NEIGHBOURS IN LAW.

FARMER O'DOWD was as happy a man As ever sowed wheat since the world began;

Broad acres were his, and of cattle a score,

And his barns were all crowded, from roof to floor,

With golden corn and juicy hay; And his plenty increased from day to day.

Down at the foot of a wooden hill, On a limpid stream, was a noisy mill; And the miller was busy from morn till night.

Working and singing with all his might.

Nowhere on earth were two happier men Than Farmer O'Dowd and Miller Glen.

But the miller dammed the stream one day,

And backward the water forced its way, Till over the farmer's meadow it flowed

And ruined the clover that he had mowed.

Quick as a flash his anger rose,

And dark indeed were the terrible woes He pledged in his wrath to visit on, His neighbour Glen for the harm he'd done.

"Lawyer," said he to a legal limb, "My neighbour—I'd be revenged on him—

Has wrought me wrong I can't abide." Said Blackstone, "You shall be satisfied."

So the farmer gave gold; and soon, alas!

As it ever is, it came to pass, That a summons went out, and then a writ,

And then an injunction followed it, The old wheel stopped, and the pleasant roar

Of the busy mill was heard no more.

But Miller Glen was not idle—he Found him a lawyer and paid his fee;

And then was waged for years and years

A strife that brought more bitter tears To Farmer O'Dowd and Miller Glen,

Than should fall to the lot of a hundred men.

In time the farmer's funds ran low, And his rich acres began to go,

And then his flocks, and bounds of feed From broad cornfield to grassy mead.

The miller struggled long and late To hold the impending hand of fate;

But all was vain—the evil hour Could not be stayed by mortal power.

And now a stranger owns the mill. Once more

Is daily heard its rhythmic roar! But never will hapless Miller Glen

Be master of his mill again. He has grown sour and grim and grey,

And toils in the mill for monthly pay.

Another, the farm. And poor O'Dowd, With haughty spirits crushed and cowed,

Lives where his proud life began— But now he's a stranger's hired man.

W. B.

GEMS.

THE majority shrewdly employ their time in obtaining favours, while the minority employ theirs in deserving them.

To render inevitable evil as light as possible, is to be in reality what may be called both happy wise.

If you would relish your food, labour for it; if you would enjoy the raiment, pay for it before you wear it; if you would sleep soundly, take a clear conscience to bed with you.

WITHOUT trial you cannot guess at your own strength. Men do not learn to swim on a table. They must go into deep water, and buffet the surges.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

A PAINKILLER.—Alcohol, one quart; gum guaiac, one ounce; gums myrrh and camphor, and cayenne pulverised, each half ounce. Mix, and shake occasionally for a week or ten days, and filter, or let settle for use. Apply freely to surface pains, or it may be taken in teaspoonful doses for internal pain, and repeat according to necessities.

FRENCH POLISH.—Take of orange shellac, two ounces; of wood naphtha, half pint; of benzoin, two drachms. Mix and put in warm place for a week and keep the materials from settling by shaking it up. To apply it after having prepared your wood by rubbing some raw linseed oil into it, and then wiping it well off again, make a rubber of cotton wool, and put some old calico over the face, and till you have a good body on your wood keep the rubber well saturated with polish. When your rubber sticks, put a very little linseed oil on and rub your polish up. Allow it to stand a few hours, and give it another coat, using rather more linseed oil on your rubber, so as to get a finer polish. Then let it stand again and finish off with spirits of naphtha, if you can; if not, add a small quantity of polish to your spirit, and you will get a good, lasting polish.

COMBINATION JAM.—Two gallons of red cherries, one gallon of red raspberries, one gallon of currants; stone the cherries and cook down; add the raspberries and currants, and cook again. To each quart add a pint of sugar, and cook fifteen minutes.

MISCELLANEOUS.

JOSH BILLINGS' PHILOSOPHY.—When I was a young man I was always in a hurry to hold the big end of the log, and do all the lifting; now I am older, I seize hold of the small end and do all the grunting. Wise men make the mistakes, and fools the blunders, and this is about all the difference between them.

PRESENTATION OF A SILVER CRADLE.—The Middlesborough Town Council have presented Lieutenant Colonel Saddle with a silver cradle. The gallant colonel, after having been elected mayor in November last, vacated the chair in order to contest a seat in the representation of the borough in Parliament in the Conservative interest. During his term of office his wife presented him with a son, and the Council determined to give him the cradle. The present mayor made the presentation, together with an illuminated address of thanks for Colonel Saddle's services during his term of office.

A USEFUL invention has recently been introduced by Mr. Thomas Ollis, engineer, in some of the pillar letter-boxes at Liverpool, and is wanted in London. The door of the pillar-box is made to shut with a spring, and in so shutting it moves a plate showing the hour of the last clearance. By this simple means the public are at once enabled to ascertain whether the box has been cleared for a particular delivery, and the post-office have a check upon their men. If an outlying letter-box were left uncleared, as now sometimes happens, there would be a ready means of detection. The mechanism would be of course worse than useless if it were not thoroughly reliable, but we understand that it has been successfully at work in Liverpool for some months.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

SARAH.—We know of no remedy for the deficient eye-lash.

R. M.—Any good cookery book will give you the desired information. Apply to a bookseller.

AN ITALIAN READER.—If you mean where are you to get the articles, apply to any chemist.

ELIZA W.—For a situation as stewardess apply to any of the steamship companies—there are several in Lendall Street, City—who will give you full details.

C. P.—The "chime" is the end of the staves of a cask, where they are bevelled off. Numerous allusions may be found to it in our old poets.

JAMES W.—Such information or assistance as we are able to give to our correspondents is rendered to them gratuitously.

ANT P.—Address the letter to the Editor of THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand. The charge for forwarding the numbers for three months would be one shilling and eightpence.

CRIVUS.—Persons with thin skins are subject to redness of the nose and cheeks in cold weather. We do not know of any remedy. It is a sign of full health, the greatest blessing you can have, and with which we would advise you to rest satisfied.

FRANK.—1. If a lady refuses to accompany a gentleman with whom she has been on friendly terms anywhere it is proper for him to ask her the reason of her refusal. 2. A young man should wait until he has some prospects of supporting a wife before becoming engaged.

NELL.—As you have really no natural talent for music you would be very foolish to try to obtain a musical situation, especially as you say you are poor, and would need the money necessary to obtain the education for other purposes.

STATIONER.—You should purchase the indices to the volumes. They would give you most of the information you write for. You would probably find a railway book-stall a convenient place to purchase the other works about which you inquire.

TRAVELLER.—A person who is unacquainted with you cannot possibly form an opinion as to your disposition, tastes, or intellectual capacity, and cannot, of course, advise you as to the especial branch of study you should take up.

LEWIS.—Any lady should have more self-respect, not to say common sense, than to allow any man to accompany her home from church who insists upon her allowing him to walk with his arm round her, and, above all, a married man. If you are afraid to be out alone in the evening you had better not attend church.

EVA.—1. We cannot say. 2. A certificate of baptism is not required from persons about to enter into the marriage contract. 3. The yolk of an egg taken raw is considered to have a beneficial effect upon the voice, and is often used by persons accustomed to sing shortly before they commence to sing.

CONSTANT READER.—1. When small pimples appear upon the face it is a sign of the blood being impure. Take sarsaparilla, and wash the face with the best yellow or tar soap. 2. For freckles, in the summer, mix sal-ammoniac one drachm, spring water one pint, lavender water or eau-de-cologne half an ounce. Apply to the face occasionally.

BLANCHE.—1. Kid gloves can be cleaned by spirits of turpentine. Put the gloves on your hands and then apply the turpentine on every part of them by means of a clean flannel. Hang them before a fire to dry. The fire must be bright, to prevent smoke or dust affecting the gloves. 2. We think you did quite right to kiss a friend, old enough to be your father, who had been absent for twelve years.

NIMROD.—The electricity of love, like electricity in general, is not very easily defined. Both, however, are very potent in action, which is produced by well known causes, albeit that the reason why is difficult to discover. Love's electric spark may not strike you for two reasons. You may not have placed yourself in the way of receiving the communication, a very likely case, from the obscurity of your letter; or there may not yet have been found any other body with whom you have the necessary affinity. The silence seems to invite you to give up the chase for a season or to try fresh fields and pastures new.

LEOLA, twenty-two, brown hair, hazel eyes, domesticated, fair, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty-four, dark, good-tempered.

BLACKHAT and HOOKPOT, two seamen in the Royal Naval Gunnery Academy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Blackhat is nineteen, fair, and fond of children. Hookpot is twenty-one, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition. Respondents must be between seventeen and twenty-one.

CLARA and LILLIAN, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Clara is twenty, tall, dark. Lillian is eighteen, loving, fair, thoroughly domesticated. Respondents must be about twenty.

ALICE, nineteen, dark hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about the same age, fond of home.

NELLIE, seventeen, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a gentleman loving and fond of home.

M. and E., two sisters, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. M. is nineteen, domesticated, fond of music. E. is twenty-two, domesticated.

W. A. H. would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen.

POLLY and KATE, two friends, wish to correspond with two young men. Polly is eighteen, brown hair, good-looking, fond of home, of a loving disposition. Kate is seventeen, black hair, handsome. Respondents must be good-looking.

LITHE, a domestic, would like to correspond with a young man. She is twenty, fair, dark brown curly hair, dark grey eyes. Respondent must be about twenty-four, good-tempered.

THE LITTLE FEET THAT NEVER STRAY.

I KNOW not what you would think of my home,
My home, with its frolicsome boys,
Overflowing with mischief, and laughter and fun,
And crowding the rooms with their toys!

The moment the sun peeps over the hills
I am awakened by small, restless feet;
And though I am weary, and long for more rest,
Their patter is music most sweet.

For I think of the day when they carried away—
One prattler, who dropped off to sleep;
And they laid him to rest where joy is unknown,
And where silence is long and is deep.

So I love to list to the hum of the top,
To the thud of the bat and the ball;
And I smile if I find in my study a kite,
Or a schooner, half-rigged, in the hall.

For the sweetest rose in the garden of bloom
Has surely a thorn for its mate;
And the brambles of boyhood will bloom as the
rose.
If with patience we prune and we wait.

Too soon the foot learneth a soberer tread,
The voice takes a manlier tone;
Too soon the heart knoweth a man's wiser
thought,
And youth for ever hath flown.

Naught, naught to me is the trouble and care—
My boys are my life to-day;
Yet the battle of life, or the night of death,
Soon may bear them for ever away.

So I'll scatter the roses of love o'er the paths
Of my rollicking boys of love I may;
For I ever remember those other feet—
The feet that never shall stray. L. S. U.

EMILY and CLARA, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Emily is thirty-two, medium height, dark hair and eyes. Clara is twenty-three, tall, light blue eyes, thoroughly domesticated. Respondents must be about the same age.

T. C.; T. B., and L. W., three friends, would like to correspond with three young ladies. T. C. is nineteen, light hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition. T. B. is twenty-one, medium height, dark, fond of home. L. W. is nineteen, tall, dark, brown hair, fond of home and music. Respondents must be about nineteen, of loving dispositions.

MINNIE and NELLIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Minnie is twenty-two, tall, dark, fond of music. Nellie is twenty-three, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, thoroughly domesticated. Respondents must be about twenty-five, tall.

HARVEY, tall, fair, blue eyes, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady. Must be dark and good-looking.

MAGGIE MAY, twenty-two, brown hair, blue eyes, and loving, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-three, dark.

HELEN P., twenty-four, fond of home and children, golden hair, blue eyes, loving, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-eight, dark hair, brown eyes, medium height, good-looking, fond of home and children.

C. W., twenty-two, brown hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a gentleman. Must be about twenty-five, dark, fond of home, and blue eyes.

CESAR, twenty-one, dark hair and eyes, tall, loving, fond of children, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age, good-tempered, fond of music, dark.

L. C. H., twenty-four, fair, dark hair, hazel eyes, and medium height, wishes to correspond with a gentleman. Must be good-looking.

ROBERT, nineteen, brown hair, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen, fond of home.

I. S., twenty-two, brown hair, grey eyes, fair, medium height, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

B. L. and M. F., two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. B. L. is nineteen, dark hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music, of a loving disposition. M. F. is twenty-two, light hair, blue eyes, fond of home and children.

L. G. and D. H., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. L. G. is nineteen, fair, dark hair and eyes, tall. D. H. is twenty-one, good-looking, dark hair and eyes.

N. F. and C. B., two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. N. F. is twenty, tall, brown hair, dark eyes, fond of home. C. B. is twenty-four, medium height, dark brown hair, dark eyes, and very fond of music.

TOMMY J., nineteen, dark hair, hazel eyes, dark, tall, good-tempered, wishes to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be about eighteen.

WILLIE and JACKIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Willie is twenty-one, medium height, auburn hair, grey eyes, fond of home and children. Jackie is twenty-three, fond of home, tall, loving.

GEORGIUS and W. F. E., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Georgius is twenty-three, fair, medium height, light blue eyes, fond of home and children. W. F. E. is twenty, brown eyes, fond of home and children, dark.

WILLIAM E. L., a seaman in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. He is twenty-two, dark, good-looking, and good-tempered.

W. L. L., twenty-two, good-looking, light hair, medium height, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen.

C. L. and H. E., two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. C. L. is seventeen, light hair, blue eyes, medium height. H. E. is eighteen, medium height, dark hair, dark brown eyes, loving, fond of home and children.

G. M. and H. B., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. G. M. is twenty-two, of medium height, fair, loving. H. B. is twenty, tall, dark, good-looking.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

K. B. is responded to by—Lizzie, twenty-one, fond of home, tall.

A. M. by—Polly, twenty, medium height, fond of home, fair.

ALBERT by—S. B., twenty-four, dark hair and eyes, medium height, fond of home, of a loving disposition, domesticated.

F. L. by—F. S., twenty-two.

A. W. by—Jennie, twenty-two, fair, and of medium height.

CLARE by—Thomas, tall, dark, fond of home.

S. L. by—Charley, twenty-two, tall, fair, of a loving disposition.

MOLLY by—H. K., twenty-three, dark.

JANE by—J. G., twenty-one, handsome.

JEWET H. by—Harry S., twenty-two, fair, of a loving disposition.

LILY Y. by—C. B. B., twenty-two, medium height, fond of music.

F. L. by—Harry, tall, good-looking.

FLORA by—M. N.

NETTIE by—S. B.

M. L. D. by—Expectancy, seventeen, dark hair, grey eyes, medium height.

DORA by—E. S. R., twenty-six, a seaman in the Royal Navy, fair.

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